OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES

OCTOBER, 1952
35¢

THE NAKED GODDESS

by

S. J. Byrne

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The People Who Make OTHER WORLDS

No. 6. L. Sprague de Camp

THIS issue we're bringing you a photo of and a few facts about one of the foremost writers in the science-fiction field—L(yon) Sprague de Camp. Statistically speaking, he was born in New York City on November 27, 1907. He spent quite a few years collecting degrees at various colleges, winding up with a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering and a M.S. in Engineering & Economics. In 1939 he married Catherine A. Crook, a stunning red-head who has done some writing in science-fiction field as well as for the radio program, Voice of America. At present the de Camp family (which includes two sons aged eleven and one) are living in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia.

Engineer, patent consultant, editor, lecturer, teacher and free-lance writer. And of these professions of Mr. de Camp's it is the last category in which we are most interested. He began free-lance writing in the late 1930's, and has since then contributed stories, articles (mainly popularizations of science) and book reviews to almost every science-fiction magazine as well as to magazines in other fields. In addition to this, he has somehow found the time to produce sixteen books, seven of which were in collaboration with other authors. He has four non-fiction books to his credit: *Inventions and Their Management* (with A. K. Berle), *The Evolution of Naval Weapons, Lands Beyond* (with Willy Ley) and *Lost Continents,* about which we'll have more to say later. Science-fiction claims de Camp's other twelve books. In collaboration with Fletcher Pratt he has *The Incomplete Enchanter, The Castle of Iron, The Carnelian Cube* and *The Land of Unreason; Genus Homo* is the result of the combined talents of de Camp and P. Schuyler Miller. To complete the list,

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EDITORIAL

DO you believe in lucky numbers? No? Well, neither do we. But just the same, we have a particular regard for number 22, which happens to be the number of this issue of OTHER WORLDS. We think you'll have a particular regard for it too, because you must already have noted the many changes we've made. Let's start with the front cover: it's a steal from Bill Hamling's idea of photo-dyed prints, of course—we like to steal good ideas. But there's an interesting story behind this cover. . .

Some time ago we were looking at a cover on *Quick,* which showed just the head and shoulders of a girl (with the usual emphasis on the girl's shoulders). The cover was cropped off at the bottom at just the precise point . . . well, the precise point. We got to wondering if maybe *Quick's* editors hadn't the idea in mind that such cropping would sell more magazines. Well, we have often had the same idea, and we've often wanted to put just a pretty girl's head on our cover, just as *Quick* did, for two reasons: we like pretty girls and we think it would help sales. So we went down to Malcolm Smith with this cover and said: "Malc, we want a girl on OW, like this. But we want her to be a science fiction girl." Malc promptly fainted. When we brought him to, it was to find him mumbling a telephone number. It seems Malc knows lots of telephone numbers (which his wife is apparently unaware of—up to now!). Well, it was the telephone number of the girl you see on this month's cover. And before we could yell "flash," Malc had this girl posing for our cover. We believe he must have taken 186 photographs of her before we were satisfied with one, and then we picked the only one he had decided was no good. "Now," said we, "instead of cropping this at the precise point, like *Quick* did, we'll use a space ship for the same purpose. Just have it coming across at the precise point. . ." Which is what Malc has done, as you see.

Then we contacted S. J. Byrne and said: "Look, Stu, we got a job for you. We want a story around that title you suggested to us some months ago—you remember, *the naked goddess.* We've got a naked goddess smiting a junior-sized space ship with a ray of pure light or something, and we'd like you to do something about it." The result is the feature story for this issue.

But do you think our troubles were over? No! Because the girl takes one look at the photo we selected and tells Malc: "You ain't gonna put me on no cover like *that!*" Malc always was tactless with the girls. Did he show her where the space ship was going to crop her? No! Naturally she objected, refused to sign a release. You have to have releases, you know, to keep from being sued, in case you misuse the photo, and if you misuse it, you get sued anyway. Well, after we had it explained to her, including sketches,

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she was rather pleased. And so are we. We think it's a fetching cover. Also, it agrees with the story in *every* detail, even to the look in her lovely eyes. Which is a novelty in covers, you'll admit.

And if you think Ray Palmer had sex in mind when he devised this cover, you're crazy! He was bowled over by that lovely face!

Next on the subject of lucky 22's is the paper we're using in this issue. Smooth as a boiled onion! We think it classes up OW like *Galaxy* and *Imagination* and all them other rags. Sheer jealousy made us do it. We're full of virtues like that. We steal, we lust, we turn green with envy. All just to make OW a better book!

Now turn to the back cover! Terrific, ain't it? It's by Robert Gibson Jones (whom we stole from Ziff-Davis, on account of they didn't use him for so long he got lonesome). Anyway, we bought ten covers from good old Bob, and planned them for back covers, plus a few front covers. Lemme tell you about that. Our title is OTHER WORLDS. Well, it so happens that Bob has a hobby. He takes a little square of drawing board, pours raw colors on it in blobs, and lets it run. Then if he sees something in the weird pattern that develops that looks interesting he elaborates on it—diddles with it until he has a painting which is really *other worldly*. Well, we have appropriated this hobby of his to serve as our new series "Other Worlds" which we'll put on the back cover. You'll see some really fantastic other worlds from now on, which will rival anything ever done before. This present back cover is reminiscent of Paul, and the next one will be reminiscent of nobody but Jones! Also, next month will be a front cover by Jones which we think is the most beautiful miniature painting Jones has ever done. All these paintings are miniatures, done no larger than the actual cover of OTHER WORLDS. Some of them ought to drive the science fiction convention auctions toward riot and madness. Might even have to call in the police to restore order . . .

Think we're through? Heck no! Take a look at the contents page. There you'll find the name L. Sprague de Camp. With a story? No. With a fact article about Atlantis. This is from his new book "Lost Continents" (Prime Press, Phila.), and is the first of a series of articles about lost continents which will absolutely panic you, and which will run for a full year! You've been asking for really good fact articles which *belong* in a magazine such as OW, and not in *Scientific American* or the Field Museum. Well, this is what you are getting! Besides, need we do more than say L. Sprague de Camp? That's a gilt-edge guarantee, brother!

Beginning next month is Richard S. Shaver's serial "Beyond The Barrier," which brings back Mutan Mion, Arl, Vanue, and all the characters of his famous "I Remember Lemuria." Only difference is, this time it's pure science fiction and

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The NAKED GODDESS

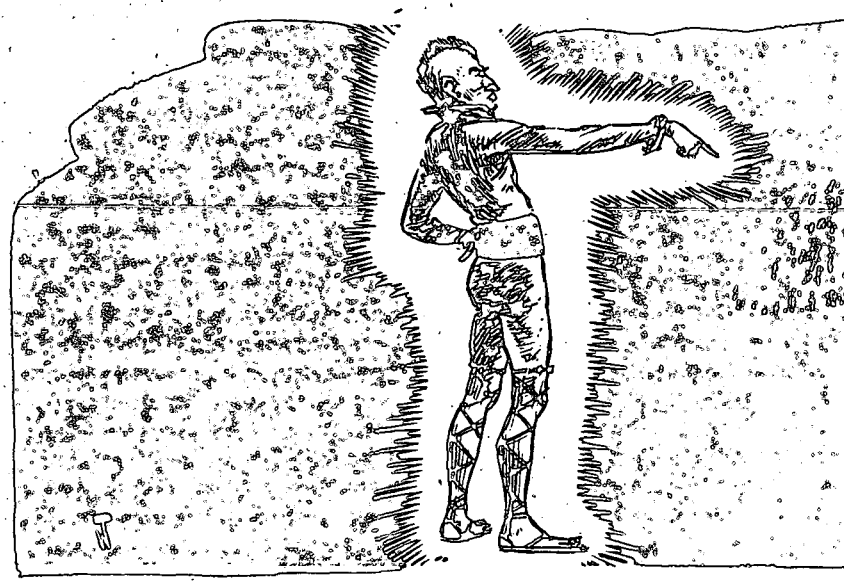
By S. J. Byrne

The goddess yearned for her handsome but scornful enemy and laughed at ugly Fitzgerald who really loved her. Yet *both* men ended up possessing her!

BOB KELLY looked up from the coded telegram and tensed, listening carefully.

His library was only partially illuminated by the reading lamp beside his chair. From the mantlepiece over the fireplace came the metronome tick of the antique French clock. This was his own private wing of the house. He knew every corner of it. At this late hour of the night there should be no sound in it other than that of the clock.

He thought he had heard the muted sound of breaking glass. It had been so faint, however, that he accepted it finally as a mistaken interpretation of more distant sounds drifting in



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occasionally from Sunset Boulevard.

Momentarily reassured, he returned to the telegram, brought to him by a special secret messenger to his private entrance. His parents had not the slightest suspicion that their cherished son was anything but a popular playboy, properly graduated in Jurisprudence without the slightest intention of practicing it.

He grinned as he continued decoding the official communication from the Narcotics Division in Washington.

Case Four Seven Four. So they were giving him a crack at it at last! Well—he had worked hard enough to get the assignment.

Poor Kiefer, he thought. He had been the last one to tackle the mystery in several years. Thompson was dead—stabbed in the back. Kelly had seen Thompson's corpse two hours after it happened. But Kiefer! Worse than dead! He had seen him that day in the hospital, just after they had brought him up from Bolivia.

Kiefer had tried to see him with his whitened eyes that were like solid scar tissue—yet he seemed to be seeing something else, with an inner sight newly acquired.

"Missionary is dead," he had murmured repeatedly. "Stay out of Guarany country. Powers of Satan!"

Case Four Seven Four. Hm-m-m. It was strewn with unknowables, plus one dead narcotics agent and one who was worse than dead—a crazy blindman.

Then there was the radioactive stuff he had picked up at Munson's secret laboratory and which he had just shipped to Division Headquarters for analysis. And there was more—incredible little clues which he had found and shared with no one . . .

JUST THEN the little man, seven inches tall, walked boldly up to him and stood there at his feet, glaring at him. The diminutive intruder had a ghostly complexion—alien—unearthly. He wore sandals which were fastened by an arabesqued sort of metallic lacing to ornate rings worn above each knee. About his waist was a girdle that sparkled with strange crystals. His small yellow eyes were slanted absurdly upward, topped by outjutting, hairless brows that formed a letter "V," giving him the most diabolical expression it was possible for Kelly to imagine.

Kelly almost dropped his pipe, but long training in self-discipline spared him that. He only sat there rigidly and stared back. And he thought about the sound he had heard—of broken glass. He thought of his late colleague, Thompson, stabbed in the back in Chicago. And he thought of Kiefer's sightless eyes and his fear-haunted words, "Powers of Satan!"

"Who are you?" he said. "What do you want?" All the while, his pulse raced. Just what was Case Four Seven Four adding up to?

"Me want product stolen by you from Munson laboratory," replied the stranger, in a thick accent. "I trace you from laboratory. You take. I want!"

Kelly eyed him narrowly, his

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thoughts racing. The unheard of little runt would not dare approach him like this if he were not prepared to defend himself. Ergo, he had some kind of concealed weapon. Furthermore, creatures like this just did not grow on Earth. In spite of his Irish blood, he impatiently rejected the thought of leprechauns.

No. The fact that this visitor was definitely from another world tied in nicely with a few other little facts he had gathered in Chicago and elsewhere. Now he was more certain than ever that Case Four Seven Four was was he had been looking for. And this little man before him—above all else—had to be kept a secret.

If he could only manage to capture him, imprison him in some way, keep others from knowing about him.

He leaned forward, elbows on knees, his pipe in his hands, and concentrated on the alien. "If you can tell me what that product is," he said, "I'll tell you *where* it is."

The other hesitated, frowning. Then he replied, "No have word in your language. The *Ivyans* call it *grillinn*. But you give Maljarn. Be quick tell where you have."

"So your name is Maljarn. Mine is Kelly. Maybe we can be friends." He doubted this — remembering Kiefer and Thompson—but he said it experimentally to see what the reaction would be.

"No time make friends," replied the other. "Your eyes make dark laughter. You no make friend."

Kelly lunged forward and grabbed

Maljarn

at him, but his hands clutched air. With an astounding agility, the other eluded him. When he looked for him in the next moment he found him opening the drawers of his desk and dumping their contents unceremoniously onto the floor.

"Why you—!" He was about to renew the struggle when the midget dumped his top drawer out and his custom made Luger fell on the floor. Kelly snatched it up. He hoped he could avoid shooting the little fellow.

"You may be quick," he said, "but you can't outjump a bullet. Now cut that out and stand still where you are!"

The alien stopped, looking up unconcernedly at the gun. He also looked at Kelly's left hand, which was busy untying his shoelace. Then he laughed.

"You waste time try to tie Mal-

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jarn up. I break even steel wire. What you tie me for? Give me *grillinn*—what you take from Munson laboratory—and I go. Enough killing already."

Kelly's eyes narrowed again. He stopped untying his shoelace. "Did you make Kiefer sick with Devil magic?" he asked. "Did you kill Thompson?"

At mention of Kiefer's name, Maljarn seemed to stiffen as though with fear, hatred, or both. "Kiefer anger *Ivya*. She make him try to go to *Sunn-lal*."

"Who is *she?* And what is Soonlal—death?—Heaven?—Hell?"

Maljarn shook his head, his eyes narrowing to slits. "No. *Sunn-lal* in *Korung-lal*—what you maybe say—Country of Other Life. Not death. Worse than death. I glad Kiefer get away. I enemy to *Ivya* and *Sunn-lal*. I fight to stop their power!"

"Good! Then why not let me help you?"

"*Fees'jeral* my only friend—maybe half friend. Maybe *Gar'nr* friend, too—maybe enemy. You not friend. No tell Maljarn where Munson product. Must have quick!"

"I sent the material from Munson's lab to Washington for analysis," said Kelly. "Now let's talk sense, Maljarn. What is that all about? You see, I know something about this mystery, not not everything. I know, for example, that all this trouble is emanating from Bolivia—from somewhere in Guarany country in the *Oriente* region. I know quite a bit about the Flame Crystals—"

At the mention of Flame Crystals, Maljarn's brows arched, his eyes wide with surprise and alarm. He ducked suddenly, went around Kelly and leaped at the French doors of the library. One of them shattered, leaving a dark hole through which he escaped.

Kelly had good reasons for not firing at Maljarn, aside from not wanting to arouse everybody in other parts of the house. Instead of firing, he followed the other swiftly.

Two hours later he came back dirty, disheveled and empty-handed. Maljarn had vanished.

AS Kelly put his desk back together, he tried to piece the puzzle in his mind together. Who was this *she?*—this dreaded *Ivya?* Why did Maljarn hate her and fight against her power? What power? Where? And what was *Sunn-lal*—the fate that was worse than death, in the "Country of the Other Life?" Kelly remembered Kiefer and his scar-tissue eyes that seemed to see things not meant for his kind. He remembered his words, "Stay out of Guarany country. Powers of Satan!"

He sat down and looked at his telegram again. So they wanted him in Washington. . . .

Little men, Flame Crystals, *Ivya* the dreaded *she*, and something that was worse than death.

Kelly shook his head and decided he needed a very stiff drink. As he mixed himself a tall Scotch highball, looking into the mirror above the liquor cabinet, one secret thought was

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paramount in his mind. The government was interested in controlling importations of narcotics. They had sent Kiefer into Bolivia to find a certain Jerome Fitzgerald, opium grower—a man also suspected of having something to do with Flame Crystals and the radioactive stuff Munson had been having his secret laboratory manufacture, at a cost involving millions of dollars.

But what the government did not know was that this business was actually, undeniably, tied up with extra-terrestrial intelligence. Which boiled down to one salient fact.

Somewhere smack dab in the middle of the whole puzzle sat a bonafide, non-fiction, tangible, workable space ship!

Kelly wanted that ship. It was worth—he lifted his glass to himself in the mirror—*anything!* He looked closer at himself and agreed that Maljarn was right. In his eyes *was* dark laughter. . . .

* * *

THE intercom clicked on, and the highly trained secretary to the Chief of the Narcotics Division recognized the excited voice of the new blonde receptionist out in the lobby.

"Hey!" exclaimed the latter, in a hushed tone. "You didn't warn me the Press was coming here this 'aft. If I'd have known I'd a worn my—"

"What do you mean?" interrupted the executive secretary. "Are there any reporters out there?"

"No, but they'll probably be here any minute. Guess who's here—and tell me why! It's none other than America's most eligible bachelor, Robert W. Kelly, of Kelly Chain Stores! How eligible can a man get! Tall, dark, brainy, lean and multi-millionairish—with his old man doing all the work and he having oodles of time to spend his oodles!"

"Helen! Is he hearing you?"

"Him? Look, dearie—he wouldn't listen to me if I was a siren—no double on-tondray intended! This guy just turned down a leapyear proposal by Guenevere Grange, Hollywood's foremost *femme fatale!* Haven't you heard? He's a woman hater—Kelly's gift to Kelly!"

"Miss Higgins!" reprimanded the executive secretary, furtively tucking her page boy coiffure into place. "You are getting out of line! Mr. Kelly has an appointment with the Chief. Will you please send him in?"

She was not in a position to release restricted information to office help, such as the fact that Bob Kelly was actually one of the Division's special deputy agents. Neither she nor Chief Johnston had ever seen him personally, as he worked out of the Los Angeles office, but the society columns of every newspaper had made him as familiar to everyone as any screen star.

As Kelly walked in he did not see the blonde receptionist stick her tongue out behind his back, but he did hear her wistful sigh just before the door closed between them.

"You are Mr. Kelly, aren't you?" said the executive secretary.

Kelly gave her a slow appraisal without smiling. "Statement, question

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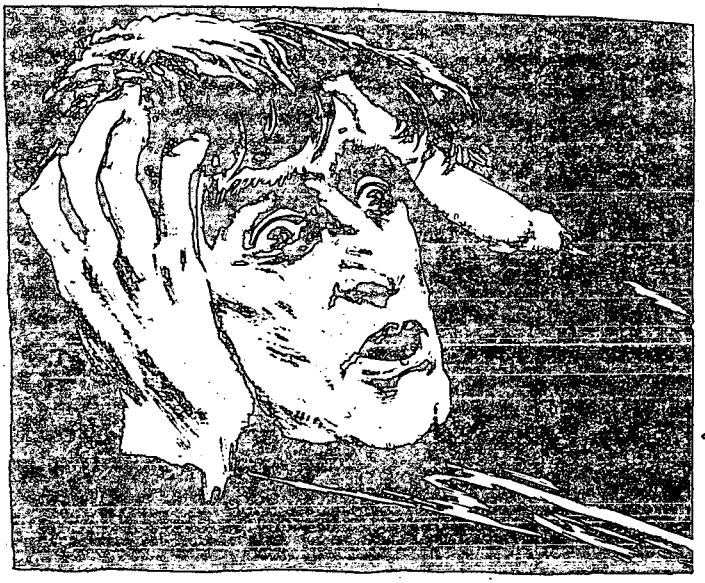

Facing Kelly was a madman . . .

or accusation?" he retorted.

She broke into a rather nervous smile. "That was rather superfluous of me," she apologized.

He saw the well-known defenseless look in her eyes—the one that pretended to be hidden yet hoped to be seen. "I know," he said. "I'm just like my pictures in the papers. I believe I have an appointment."

She straightened up, now strictly on the defensive. "Statement, question or accusation?" she snapped.

He stopped in his tracks toward Chief Johnston's door and gave her that slow look again. "All right. So it's even. Now may I go in?" Without waiting for her to reply, he opened the door and entered the inner office.

The executive secretary did not stick her tongue out, but she did stamp her foot and make a mental note about woman haters. "There's something that *makes* a man that way," she remarked aloud to herself.

"Yeah, it's unnatural, all right," put in the receptionist over the intercom, which had not been turned off. "Me, I'll taken a woman lover every time! A man who hates women's got some kind of guilty conscience or is up to no good! Maybe the Division ought to investigate him!"

"YOUR name Kelly?"

The tone of the question made it sound as though the Narcotics Chief had said, "So you're

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ucker number three. What have *you* ot to offer that two good predeces- ors did not have?"

His interrogator did not say this o Bob Kelly in so many words, but is tired gray eyes were worth a whole chapter of oral expression. He at behind the wide, mahogany desk nd slumped, examining his deputy gent with apparent disinterest. How- ever, Kelly knew Chief Johnston from ll the stories he had picked up out of the Los Angeles office from other gents. There was a hidden glint in the depths of his eyes, like the star you look for in a sapphire.

Kelly scored a point by not answer- ing the question. Instead, he indicated with his eyes the obvious answer—his file, including a recent photo- graph, already spread out in front of Johnston.

"Don't sit down," said the latter, as Kelly moved toward a leather up- holstered chair. "I've got something to show you in the next room. But be- fore we get down to details on Case Four Seven Four, answer this ques- tion. Why do you want it? It's ten years old, unsolved, it's killed one very experienced agent and deprived another man of sight and sanity."

"You have my record," replied Kelly, eyeing the other steadily.

Johnston had to admit that. It was more than a record. It looked like a pedigree, and to the average run of agents who had graduated from the school of hard knocks it made them envious, even resentful. Kelly was one of those ninety day wonders who made everybody mad by extending the ninety days indefinitely. He really was good, but he gave and asked no quarter and his real friends were very few. The fact that his basic training had been garnished with a very solid degree in Law, plus un- numbered athletic laurels and an out- standing ability as an agent was en- viable enough, but the salt in the wound was his money and family background. Kelly did not have to be an agent. He did not have to be any- thing. Yet he was one of the best in the field.

Johnston was making a second ap- praisal. He saw before him a wiry, well-built Irishman, six feet tall, crinkly black hair, and a "go to hell" look in his alert, black eyes—eyes that gave a warning, under bushy black brows, because they laughed in a very mirthless way.

"Okay, so you're a stickler for law and order," said Johnston. "You hate crooks with a purple passion — es- pecially dope smugglers."

"That should be answer enough," replied Kelly. "I've studied the file copy on Four Seven Four. This Fitzgerald character has been ship- ping opium to the States for ten years and nobody's been able to stop him, in spite of the fact that you've nar- rowed down his location to the Bolivi- an *Oriente* region. He's been respon- sible, directly or indirectly, for the death of Thompson and the—disa- bling of Kiefer. Moreover, he has succeeded in giving opium a foothold on the South American continent. The man's got to be stopped and I'd like a chance to stop him."

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"In spite of the fact that you'll be going it alone in unexplored jungle country—the land of the murderous Potorero and Yanaigua and Guarany savages. Usually when we give an assignment to deputy agents it's on their home stamping grounds and they have a few clues in their hands, but you're going into the Unknown. Outside of your Spanish and previous knowledge of South America, you're empty handed. Or *are* you?"

Bob Kelly's dark eyes met his gaze coldly. "Fitzgerald *lives* there," he said. "I intend to find him."

Johnston's enigmatic stare was searching, curious, half-accusing, but Kelly returned it with a darker, deeper glint. Suddenly, the Narcotics Chief swung in his swivel chair and got to his feet, decisively.

"Look in here," he said, leading Kelly to an inner door of the suite of offices. "This may be something new for you on this case."

He opened the door. Kelly walked through—and Johnston deliberately closed and locked it behind him . . .

THERE was no time for turning and trying to open it, to find Johnston and ask him what was up. Facing Kelly was a madman.

He was, or had been, a young man perhaps twenty-five years of age, wearing a tailor made gabardine suit that would have been considered expensive and in good taste at one time, revealing established background and good breeding. But now he was a shrunken shell of his former self, dishevelled, long-haired, hollow-eyed—an easily recognizable case of a narcotics addict gone psychopathic.

Those water eyes with their dilated pupils bored into his with an intentness that warned him at once, even as the talon like hands shot out toward his throat. One hand bore a ring—a ring that supported a large, blackened stone, covering a finger that was also blackened as though it had been burned to charcoal.

Instinctively, Kelly fell into Judo routine, and his attacker landed on the floor behind him. But he arose immediately and with a mournful shriek attacked him again. This time he kneed Kelly and bit him simultaneously, at which point Kelly flipped him over and gave him a vicious rabbit punch.

The madman lay still on the floor. Kelly could have felt sorry for him, but that blackened ring on the stranger's finger was shooting off fire crackers in his brain. Quickly, with trembling hands, he grasped the ring and tried to remove it.

That was when Johnston walked in accompanied by two of his Headquarters agents. Kelly tensed, prepared to resist arrest, then recognized the other two as typical Beef Trust trouble stoppers. He let them pick him up and frisk him, ignoring their whistles when they uncovered his inlaid and engraved custom made Luger.

"What's the deal?" he asked, hotly. "Why the human booby trap? Kind of a rough way of finding out how much Judo I know—especially on a poor wreck like this!" He indicated

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the body on the floor.

"Kelly," said Johnston, swiftly, "you were quite the silent type in my office. Why all the wordage now? You're covering up!"

Kelly tossed his head back to clear his forehead of a crinkly mop of black hair. His eyes watched Johnston, warily. "Covering up what?" he said. "I'm no prisoner. How about unscrewing these grapple hooks?"

At a nod from Johnston, the two strongarms released him. Two more men came in and dragged out the limp body of the madman—*after* the blackened ring had been removed. Johnston now held the latter object on the palm of his hand and showed it to Kelly, watching his facial expressions carefully.

"That's a Flame Crystal," he said. "Or rather, it *was*. No one knows exactly what they are. There have been three of these on record as having entered the United States, each of them inside a shipment of opium sent through by Fitzgerald, out of Bolivia. They are radio-active and will cause death to the wearer eventually, unless he can obtain a fresh one. They emit something more than Alpha and Beta particles and the usual gamma rays. There is something in the radiation components which produces the effect of both an anodyne and a hypnotic. In short, it is a form of narcotic, causing extreme addiction and a rapid degeneration of character and personality. It is far worse than opium or any of its derivatives, such as morphine or heroin. In fact, it's dynamite. This one you see is burned out or I wouldn't be holding it this long. In the burn-out stage, two phases are observable in the victim. First, there is a rapidly increased rate of deterioration, both physically and mentally, yet he can't do without the crystal in spite of proportionately increasing pain. Secondly, he will stop at nothing short of suicide to obtain a fresh crystal."

Johnston paused deliberately and stared at Kelly.

"That's a very bright dissertation," said Kelly, "but why are you briefing me on flame crystals?"

"I *said*—the victim will stop at nothing short of suicide to obtain a fresh crystal. Perhaps I should have added one more important point. So sensitive does the victim become that anyone carrying a fresh crystal stands out like a lighthouse in a storm."

"So?"

Johnston's gray eyes flashed impatiently. "So that's why you were attacked. That addict was on his last legs, with one foot in the grave, but when you walked in he acted like somebody had given him a triple shot of adrenalin. Kelly, hand it over! You're carrying the flame crystal Tommy Thompson claimed he found in one of Fitzgerald's confiscated shipments, but which he never lived to deliver!"

Kelly did not move, but Johnston's agents did. They tripped him, and when they had him on the floor they took his shoes off. Again, he might have struggled, but there was an inevitability to the whole situation which checked his resistance.

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"It's in the left heel," he told them sullenly. "And next time don't play so rough!"

Johnston was opening a lead insert in the top of the radiation-shielded heel of Kelly's left shoe with a pocket knife. "You're lucky we know who killed Thompson," he said. "Otherwise we'd be holding you for that, too."

"You're not holding me for anything," retorted Kelly. "That was legitimate — it was a clue and I needed it. The fewer people you gab to, the fewer—"

"Shut up!" Johnston gingerly carried the shoe over to a desk in the corner of the room and turned on a special lamp that emitted black light. "Pull down the shades," he directed, and one of the agents complied. The other followed closely behind Kelly as he walked over to the desk in his stocking feet.

Johnston had dumped the fresh flame crystal out into a porcelain dish. Under the black light it flamed with a light that was neither blue nor green but a weird combination of both. It was an elusive shade, shifting vaguely from one impression of color to another, as though the eye were not built to register it.

"Jesus!" exclaimed one of the agents. "Talk about something out of this *world*!"

Kelly and Johnston gave him a startled look. Then Johnston addressed Kelly. "Tell us about it," he ordered, quietly.

Kelly shrugged. "You know about as much as I do," he answered. "Stone number two is in that ring. The first one arrived five years ago in one of Fitzgerald's shipments, which was intercepted at Newport, August, 1946. Then part of the shipment was stolen again, along with the crystal. Two years later a second shipment of the Fitzgerald opium was picked up. The sucker that had bought the first crystal found a way of taking the second one. That was when you sent Kiefer into Bolivia and he showed up with —well, I saw him in Los Angeles. You know what he looked like. I knew like the rest of you, that a third confiscation of one of Fitzgerald's shipments might well produce two things —first, another flame crystal, and secondly—the addict who copped the second one, or the peddler, which would be better yet."

"SO when Thompson picked up a Fitzgerald shipment last week and headed for Washington with you went A.W.O.L. from your San Pedro assignment and followed him in that private plane of yours," put in Johnston.

Kelly nodded, and again that mirthless laughter was in his dark eyes as he returned Johnston's stare. "I figured Thompson might not know about the crystals. I thought he was just bringing you what he believed to be a package of confiscated opium. I doubted he knew enough about Case Four Seven Four to know what a flame crystal was, as he had told me only a short time before that he had not read up much on the case. Even

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if he did know, lifting the crystal from him would be like a hidden ball play to confuse whoever might *really* be after the crystal."

"You overtook him in Chicago," said Johnston.

"Yes. He let me guard his roost while he went out for a shave. That's when I found that crystal."

"One hour after you left him," said Johnston, "he was stabbed to death. The man you just knocked out was the killer. We made sure he was unarmed before turning him loose on you, but we had to make the test and see if he could detect it on you."

Kelly looked at his crystal, still gleaming under the black light. "What will happen to the poor devil now?" he asked. Johnston noted compassion in the other's voice but saw none of it in his eyes.

"He'll die unless we give him this stone, too."

Kelly tensed. "You going to give it to him?"

"We thought of placing him under observation and watching the effect."

"Who is the guy?"

"None other than James Munson the Third—the one who paid for the secret laboratory. We haven't got a report yet on the stuff you sent us, but Munson must have paid over a million just to have that one batch produced. It's radium or something even rarer."

Kelly's dark brows arched. "*That* was Munson? I didn't recognize him. I played against him several times in polo matches. So *he* is the sucker who bought up the flame crystals!"

"That *was* Munson. We've cooperated with his relatives in keeping this out of the Press. He paid five hundred grand for the second crystal and God knows how many millions he was already paying for the third, making that high priced radioactive stuff for Fitzgerald or whoever is behind this crystal business. You can understand what the effect of a sudden influx of flame crystals—"

Kelly banged his fist on the desk. "That is precisely my motive!" he barked. "I wanted this remaining crystal—as a lead."

"How could you use it?"

Use it!—thought Kelly. *I could use a gross of them! With a space ship and an exclusive pipeline to the source of the flame crystals, I could control—*

"By applying an old principle," he said aloud. "People who are involved in a crime or racket or know something about it usually break down and give out with additional information if they see the investigator has acquired a vital inside piece of evidence already. I figure that my possession of a flame crystal gives me that inside track. I think that if I flashed it at the proper time under the right noses—in Bolivia—I might get a lead on Fitzgerald."

Johnston sat back in his chair and gazed for a long time at the crystal. Then he looked up suddenly at his two agents. They looked back at him and slowly nodded.

Whereupon he flicked off the black light and shoved the crystal toward Kelly. In the semi-darkness of the

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room it glowed feebly now like the luminescent dial of a watch. Johnston's move was a significant gesture. It meant an earlier death for James Munson the Third, who was doomed, anyway. For Kelly, it meant a ticket to Bolivia—and a passport to danger. Kiefer had been one of the Division's most resourceful agents, yet his search for Fitzgerald had ended in—*what?*

Where would it end for Kelly? As he replaced the crystal in the heel of his shoe, he knew his wishes in that regard were quite specific.

"When you get to Bolivia," said Johnston, still eyeing Kelly with a half angry expression of unsatisfied curiosity, "you'd better get in touch with our ambassador in La Paz. He—ah—may have some leads for you."

"What kind of leads?"

"It's just a tip-off—something Kiefer sent us before he—well, you know what."

No. I don't know what. But I'm going to find out. . . .

KELLY had been to Rio and Buenos Aires. He spoke fluent Spanish and some Portuguese. But this was his first trip to the West Coast of South America.

Somewhere over the Gulf of Lower California he half-dozed in the C.M.A. airliner and looked out over water that had been changed to platinum by the magic of an old, old moon. It was two A.M. and the ventilators whispered coldly. He thought of the coldness of interplanetary space and of other worlds—of a world that would be his exclusive hideout in the perpetration of history's first perfect crime. Where was that world? Mars? Venus? Where? Or would he never live to see it? With his life at stake, pitting himself against the secret forces of an extra-terrestrial intelligence, he was still convinced that the gamble was worth it. In fact, this was living!

He fell asleep thinking about James Munson the Third, and at six A.M. he awoke, still thinking of him. If the power of the flame crystals could commandeer this man and every financial resource in his possession, what could the crystals do if placed in the hands of politically powerful people? He, Robert Kelly, the nice little rich boy who had been abandoned by his parents to an apparent destiny as a vegetable figurehead of sophisticated society—*he* would secretly rule what he wished! With a space ship, nobody could stop him!

Below, the coast of Mexico was a swampland and morning mists were rising upward like the startled spirits of the *Dans Macabre*, hastening after the skirts of night.

At breakfast, above sunny Mazatlan, he wondered what connection Munson's lab had with flame crystals. The DC-6 droned tirelessly onward, banking gracefully inland now toward Guadalajara and the mile high plateau of the *Distrito Federal* beyond. In Mexico City, he thought, he might receive an answer.

He smoked and planned. Trained in logic and naturally endowed with a keen, meticulous mind, he seldom

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uttered an idle word or made a futile step. Everything had to fit into the *pattern,* as though he were controlling his own destiny.

That remark he had made to Maljarn—about having sent the Munson sample to Washington. If his logic were well founded upon the proper premises, then that single remark might open a path for him to the space ship.

The Munson product had to be analyzed. Kelly had to know what it was. *After* that, if Maljarn could get his hands on it again—the thing he had come to America for—he would return to his base of operations.

How to follow him? There were ways of making Marjarn blaze a trail. There had been a string of agents handling Fitzgerald's shipments. Their papers and records would always point the way to the next agent—deeper in, closer to home. If Maljarn thought that Kelly was on that trail, he would blaze it—with murder. Kelly did not care about men he might thus be using as decoys. They would all be cheap smugglers and confidence men—mere pawns in this interplanetary game of chess. What he wanted was the space ship—and a monopoly on the world's deadliest narcotic. Flame crystals.

Then, suddenly, logic presented another neat possibility to his mind: Perhaps Maljarn would take a short cut and seek to eliminate one Robert W. Kelly first of all!

Why hadn't he tried it before? Kelly shrugged and looked below him at picturesque Jalisco.

When he checked in that morning at the *Reforma,* a polite hotel clerk handed him the message he sought. It was coded, but in his room he worked it out:

MUNSON PRODUCT IS RADIUM DOG STOP EXPLAIN GRACE LINE B/L COVERING ONE HELICOPTER CARE PANAGRA COCHABAMBA.

"Dog," of course, represented the letter D. Radium D. Very enlightening. What the hell was radium D? He answered the cable:

RE COPTER JUNGLE TRANSPORTATION PERSONAL ACCOUNT STOP DETERMINE IF PREVIOUS SHIPMENTS ROGER DOG TRACEABLE S.A.

TWO DAYS later, after glimpsing Guatemala and bouncing through a tropical storm over Lake Nicaragua and Costa Rica, Kelly sat in the screened-in veranda bar of the old Hotel Tivoli in Panama. Over the remains of a planter's punch he was perusing a U.S. Government bulletin on Radium D when he was handed a second cable by a white-jacketed Haitian boy who seemed to speak nothing but the untranslatable *patois* of the Caribbean until he received a dollar tip. After that, he spoke the King's English and went for another planter's punch.

It was raining one of those heavy, soporific Panamanian rains that pour steadily off the broad eaves into the

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green, green banana leaves, and Kelly was in no mood to hurry. His blood had turned tropical along with the atmosphere. He had passed that Mysterious Divide into the land where people live for today and veteran U.S. residents maintain an even pace of drinking against the ravages of amoebic dysentery and end up by saying, "Thank God for *manana!*"

The cable read:

TWO ROGER DOG TRACEABLE PEDRO MOLLA LIMA STOP PERUVIAN EMBASSY ADVISED STOP MUNSON SAMPLE STOLEN TRACE LIMA LEAD.

So Maljarn actually swallowed the bait!

"You have received good news, sir?" The Haitian boy, returning with the planter's punch, saw the slow smile forming on Kelly's face.

Kelly grinned disarmingly and winked. "Just got a hot tip on a horse."

The waiter smiled mercurially with understanding and personal enthusiasm. "Oh. You play the long shots?"

Kelly winced. "Does it show that much?" he said.

"Maybe you would like a good lottery ticket?" suggested the boy, hopefully.

Kelly sipped his punch and returned the stare of a satin looking Latin girl at the bar. "That's too easy," he replied, mentally killing two birds with one stone. "I'll stick to the long shots . . ."

FLYING South over the interminable mountains and cloudlands of Colombia, down the magnificent Valley of the Cauca toward Cali and Ecuador, Kelly crammed on the subject of radium D, aided by the excellent Argentine cuisine of the Pan American-Grace Airlines. The steaks got thicker the farther South he went, but so did the subject at hand.

Radium D belonged to the Uranium series. First there was Uranium One, with a "half-life" of 4.6 billion years, during which time it kicked off quite a few Alpha particles. Then came Uranium X sub-Two, and so on down through Uranium Two, 170,000 years, Ionium, 69,000 years, Radium C, 19.5 minutes, Radium B, 26.8 minutes, Radium A, 3 minutes, Radon, 3.85 days, and Radium, itself. This had a half-life of 1,690 years. Then came Radium C sub-One, lasting all of one millionth of a second, followed by Radium D, with a half-life of 16.5 years.

After that, the end was near for all the pyrotechnics in the form of Alpha and Beta particles and gamma rays. Radium E had a half-life of five days, followed by Polonium, 140 days. Then came lead and the end of the radioactive Uranium series.

Kelly understood at last how geologists could use a radioactive series of elements to determine the age of the Earth. A curious thought entered his mind. What would future geologists find on other planets? On Mars, for instance, if they found lead but a complete absence of radioactive elements in the Uranium series they

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would know that the planet was at least ten billion years old.

Something bothered him about that conclusion. To the inhabitants of an older planet, radioactive elements would be *priceless*. Then what about flame crystals? They were radioactive. Could they have come from an older planet such as Mars? Venus, on the other hand, was young—

He shook his head, and the auburn haired stewardess leaned over him with an attentive smile.

"Air sick, Mr. Kelly?"

He gave her a slow appraisal. "Just indisposed," he replied laconically. Which effectively disposed of the stewardess but not his thoughts concerning other planets—and a certain space ship that lay hidden somewhere in Bolivia. Or did it? He looked forward to Lima and a stiff drink. . . .

AT THE U.S. EMBASSY in Lima, overlooking Plaza San Martin, he discovered that the "trail" was being blazed more effectively than he had planned. An F.B.I. man out of the local office had just scored deadman number two for Case Four Seven Four. He had tried to apprehend Pedro Molla, but both were found dead. No bullets fired. No visible wounds. Cause of death—unknown. One file of records had been burned hastily, but some useful papers had been recovered.

That night in the Bolivar Grill, to the tune of a very *good* Latin orchestra (for a change), he pencilled the draft of a new cable to Washington, for handling by the local office:

CONFIRMATION MOLLA WAS SHIPPING ROGER DOG BOLIVIA BUT MOLLA AND AGENT HERE KILLED STOP LIMA ADVISING SUSPECT PRINCIPAL OPERATOR STOP PREVIOUS SHIPMENTS RELAYED COCHABAMBA STOP MOVING IN.

HE had seen the evidence at the Embassy late that day—a salvaged copy of an export declaration and bill of lading out of Molla's ransacked freight forwarding office on *Calle Union*. It pointed like an arrow to the next stop on the trail, showing the forwarding address of one Benjamin Iparraguirre, in Cochabamba, Bolivia. It mentioned "medicine-perishable." A check on the bank deposits of all local Customs inspectors and those of their relatives and friends had tied together five large accounts of one Antonio Velarde who had confessed to receiving large bribes from Molla.

With Kelly was an American secretary from the Consul's office. It was traditional courtesy on the part of the Embassy and Consulate to furnish respectable company to visiting government men on such occasions, and in this case the assignment had been considered an enviable one by the girls who had not been chosen to accompany the internationally famous playboy. But his companion was now beginning to have her doubts. She tidied her blonde, updraft coiffure and studied Kelly restlessly as the orchestra went *zamba* with

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"Brazil."

He looked at her suddenly and smiled. "Guess I've been neglecting you," he said.

Kiefer—what was that remark Kiefer made, staring at me with his sightless eyes?

"Wouldn't 'ignoring' be a better word?" she countered. "It's the Kelly trademark, isn't it?"

He frowned into his drink, then raised an eyebrow at her. "What do you mean?"

"Ignoring women," she answered. "If I were to judge other women by myself I'd say you don't *hurt* their feelings. You just rub them the wrong way."

He grinned, revealing an even row of perfect white teeth. "What would you recommend?"

The missionary is dead. That's what Kiefer kept saying. The missionary is dead. What missionary? What is significant about his being dead?

"I'm not interested enough to make any recommendations," she retorted. "But just for the record I'd like to know how you came to *think* you hate women."

"I don't *hate* women," he answered. "I'm just not interested."

The blonde sniffed and raised her eyebrows. "Well! At least you *look* like a man! If it's not too personal, what *is* wrong with you?"

Maljarn mentioned friends. "Fees'jeral"—could that be a mispronunciation of Fitzgerald? If so—there's another man to be accounted for—Gar'nr. Who is Gar'nr? Martian? Earthman? Devil?

Kelly still toyed with his drink, gradually becoming aware of the swaying couples who were caught in the web of rhythm woven by the *zamba* orchestra. "Oh I don't know," he said. "Maybe it's because—"

"They've been too easy to get?"

"Not exactly. That depends on the type. Mainly, I can't stand women who think they know all the answers, and I guess my contacts have always been with that type. They think they know all the answers, no matter what. Just like my mother and father." The girl saw bitter defiance creep into Kelly's face. "They knew all the answers where I was concerned. They always knew what I should eat, when I should go to bed, what I should wear, whom I should choose for my friends, what school I should attend and what I should study. In their eyes I'm the perfect product of their own handiwork. I'm a fine boy but not to be entrusted with the responsibility of the family business. I can spend their money but not earn any of it. Do you think they even know I'm an agent? They have been reassured by the papers, no doubt, in learning that I am ostensibly making a tour of the racing clubs."

Maljarn has not figured this Gar'nr out yet. He said maybe he was a friend and maybe he was an enemy. I've got to locate Gar'nr.

"So," said the blonde, "you have a phobia of being trapped in matrimony with a woman like your mother or, possessing the temperament of your father. What you want is the

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old-fashioned, simple minded, clinging vine type."

"More or less. Why not?"

"They're cute but there's no demand for them. Nowadays a girl's got to be able to handle herself in a man's world."

"And when they get frustrated, stranded in marriage without happiness, they blame the men for not making them blissfully happy."

Maljarn is opposed to this evil power represented by Ivya. My God! Are two opposing extra-terrestrial forces involved? Maybe I'm going to run into a full-fledged alien invasion!

"I suppose divorces can all be blamed on *women!*"

"In the majority of cases, yes. They started it all when they demanded woman suffrage. From the stone age until that time, men ruled their women, and the women loved it. Ever since then—"

The blonde extracted a cigarette from her Peruvian silver case and closed it with a vicious snap. "Mr. Kelly, if anyone ever wished you personal anguish or wanted to put another warp in your soul, all they'd have to do is confront you with the women you really want. Someday that will happen, but for your sake I hope it doesn't!"

Kelly slowly finished his drink. Then he smiled and got to his feet, thinking of his flight over the mighty escarpment of the Andes into Bolivia, scheduled for the next day. At Cochabamba he would wait for his helicopter, if it hadn't arrived already. Then —Santa Cruz and the jungle—Guayany country. Also, he was wondering if anyone other than Maljarn himself could have killed Pedro Molla and the local F.B.I. agent—*without leaving the trace of a wound.* If Maljarn, how had he gotten here so quickly? In the space ship? He saw himself fording an unknown stream, and the stepping stones consisted of three deadmen—so far.

"Shall we dance?" he asked her.

"Oh yes!" she accepted, with sarcastic enthusiasm. "Let's dance, drink, and be merry!"

"For tomorrow we—"

"What did you say?"

He swung her into the *zamba.* "Skip it!" he said. "I'm just going through my change of climate . . ."

PERUVIANS call Arequipa the "lowlands" in spite of its eight thousand feet of altitude. Behind the sunny, tile-roofed town rises the answer for it—towering Chachani and the seventeen thousand foot volcanic cone of Misti, gargantuan portals to the *Alto*—that land of frozen altitudes which breeds its own species of humans—the Upland Dwellers.

To get over the top, Kelly's ship had to exceed eighteen thousand feet. Then, on the downward slant toward the highest commercial airport in the world at La Paz, he was treated to one of the outstanding scenic wonders of the world—painfully blue Lake Titicaca, whose far horizon was formed by the glaring white peaks of the greater Andean Cordillera. The distant monarchs rose in some places above twenty-two thousand feet,

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seeming to march remotely and mysteriously, like uncommunicative frost giants, along the deep blue fringe of Heaven. They were majestic without ostentation, so vast that their true perspective was grasped only subconsciously.

Such was the spectacular gateway to Bolivia, one of the most impoverished countries of the world—Bolivia, with its twelve thousand foot, windswept plateaus, its fertile middle lands, its politically monopolized tungsten mines and oil fields, its barren Chaco and its scrubby jungles, a geographical island without seaports, country of modernity, mediaevalism and primitive savagery—at once a vampire and a neglected virgin.

La Paz, at twelve thousand feet, gave Kelly a case of *saroche*. His eyes felt as though they were filled with fish hooks and his veins seemed ready to burst. He paused there only long enough to pick up a special package from the U.S. Embassy— plus special Bolivian licenses. Even in Bolivia one had to have a good excuse for carrying a tommygun and copious rounds of ammunition, not to mention grenades. Kelly found his best excuse was his destination — Guarany country. During the Chaco War, he learned, these savages had made successful forays against large military convoys.

In La Paz he found no further details concerning Kiefer's experience in Bolivia. It was the same story. Panagra had shipped him through to Lima. He was supposed to have been afflicted with a rare jungle fever that blinded the eyes and burned out certain areas of the brain.

But he found that Benjamin Iparraguirre's business licenses were on record. He was a truckline operator between Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, a rather notorious jungle baron and general pirate. He maintained a small office in the Hotel Continental, Cochabamba. Customs lists did *not* show any "perishable medicine" coming from Pedro Molla.

However, the ambassador provided him with the name of a certain Dr. Mayban; head of the South American Indian Mission, which lay at the farthest outpost of Bolivian civilization —at Santiago de Roboré. He was purported to have some personal knowledge of Fitzgerald.

"Dr. Mayban is a reliable man," the U.S. Ambassador told him, "and he has had some rather amazing experiences on various occasions when he and his colleagues entered Guarany and Potorero country to seek converts to Christianity. Most of these missionaries are impractical idealists, in my opinion, but Mayban is a realist. He does not expect the jungles to open up before him like the Red Sea before Moses. He's been here too long. He takes a gun with him when he goes out to convert those murderous devils. You can depend on what he tells you, but the things he can't explain he may keep quiet about."

"Such as?"

Mayban is a missionary, but not the dead one. Who was the dead one?

The Ambassador hesitated. Then

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he smiled and said, "Why don't you let Dr. Mayban tell you? I'll give you a diplomatic pass and a letter of introduction—as an author who is gathering material for the U.S. Department of Education. Your Law background will be helpful. We'll say you are making a study of primitive Law and want to get as close as possible to savage races of Man. We'll radio Roboré and they can telegraph from there to the Mission and let the Doctor know you're coming."

"Why? Does he have to make preparations to receive another white man?"

Is the venerable doctor covering up?

Again the Ambassador smiled. "You do not know this part of the world very well. Missionaries are always guarding their converts against the Military and other possible intruders. Not everybody is welcome up there in Santiago de Roboré."

"You mean—strangers, liquor and women don't mix well."

"That's about it. Not long ago three lonesome soldiers on leave from the border garrison at Puerto Suarez came up there ostensibly on a hunting trip—but they got mixed up with some of Mayban's converted native girls and I'm told they almost paid for it with their lives. He beat them up with his bare hands and then fasted for a week to punish himself for losing his temper. Might have saved himself the trouble, though. The soldiers were later ambushed by savages and killed."

"By *savages?*"

"Well, they were found with their heads and arms broken in the peculiar fashion that can only be attributed to the Potorero method of attack. I don't know if you've ever seen a Potorero *macana*. A deadly weapon made of heavy iron wood. Anything in the path of a blow from one of those weapons will break."

"I'd still like to get an idea of what Mayban really knows."

"Well, as a come on you might ask him about the *little man.*"

Kelly had to exert every effort of will to control his facial expression. "Little man?" he asked, quietly—too quietly.

The Ambassador looked at him strangely. "Just ask him about it. That's all I can tell you."

"What about Fitzgerald?"

"He's a legend. And there are other legends, too — concerning another whiteman who went into that country years ago—name of Garner."

Garner! There is Maljarn's uncertain friend—Gar'nr!

"Should I know about him?"

"Nothing much to tell. Came here about twenty-five years ago and did some trading with the Mission for about ten years. Seemed to have plenty of money. He shipped in large quantities of scientific equipment and materials, ostensibly to set up some sort of modern mission headquarters of his own, back in unexplored territory. Had the Guarany savages working for him—eating out of his hand. Then he disappeared and there's been no trace. He was a personal friend of Dr. Mayban's."

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Talks like Garner is dead. But Maljarn referred to him as living.

"Then Mayban ought to know what the equipment was for."

"Ha! On *that* subject you'll *never* get him to open his mouth! You see, Garner was a sort of evangelist, himself, but he had some radical ideas—and maybe they misfired, I don't know. Anyway, the whole thing seems to be a skeleton in the closet up there. Mayban won't talk about it."

Kelly rose to his feet. "Maybe he'll talk to *me*," he said. His dark eyes glittered, but the rest of his face was expressionless.

Kelly hopped a Lloyd Aereo Boliviano plane East. He took with him a parting remark made by the Ambassador's cute brunette secretary—"and he was such a nice young man!" It was the past tense he resented.

But he was intrigued by one thought. He wondered how much Dr. Mayban would tell him if he were suddenly confronted with a Flame Crystal. . . .

THE ONLY thing he found in Cochabamba, besides Germans turned "Swiss" since 1942 and Quichua Indians with tall white hats, was his helicopter, English cigarettes—and the best brand of beer in South America. The helicopter had been shipped out of Lima some time before. Panagra, otherwise known as Pan American-Grace Airlines, had already put it in good operating condition and gassed it up—on a government backed work order.

At the Hotel Continental he found Iparraguirre's trucking office closed. The proprietor had accompanied a shipment personally to Vila Vila. Where was Vila Vila? End of the railhead East. If you looked at it on a map you could draw a line from Cochabamba through Vila Vila and make yourself an arrow pointing in the general direction of Santa Cruz—Kelly's jumping off point into wilderness. Between Vila Vila and Santa Cruz was a truck route. Over that route Iparraguirre's trucks operated incessantly between the rainy seasons. This was October. Spring was beginning for the Bolivian *Oriente*. The "trail" was still apparent.

Kelly took his helicopter and headed for Santa Cruz. . . .

COCHABAMBA lies at an altitude of eight thousand feet, enjoying a climate similar to that of Southern California. Beyond it, eastward, lie low mountains which surrender gradually to the hot lowlands and the stubby jungles that lead eventually to the Paraguay River, the Brazilian frontier and the Matto Grosso. Out in the sun-drenched center of this vast territory lies Santa Cruz, a sleepy, tiled-roofed agricultural town that provides overnight accommodations for international air passengers bound eastward for Rio or westward for Lima, and Santiago, in Chile.

Kelly gassed up at Santa Cruz and took time off to have breakfast and run into town. Without ceremony, he walked into Iparraguirre's terminal office and found the gentleman he sought. He had to speak to him in

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Spanish, also without ceremony.

The man was a typical half-breed, or *meztizo*. Indian black hair, high cheek bones, his brown face ravaged by the usual scars of smallpox. There were also a few other scars. And his brown eyes answered Kelly's silent laughter with a deadly coldness after he had inspected the latter's official credentials.

"What do you want?"

Kelly wanted him to talk or go to jail. What did he know about Fitzgerald, Kiefer, Garner, Pedro Mollo, opium shipments, Radium D, Flame Crystals, and the murder of a certain Federal Agent in Lima?

"Nothing. You have no warrant for me. You are an American and can make no arrests here. I suggest you leave my office at once or be *thrown* out! This is an insult!"

Iparraguirre had a telephone. Kelly sat down on the latter's desk, wound the ancient crank vigorously, and asked the startled operator to connect him with the police. At first Iparraguirre scowled. Then he laughed.

"I have work to do, but if you wish to provide me with amusement—"

Before his hand could reach his deck drawer, Kelly grabbed him by his greasy shirt and jerked him to his feet, almost off the floor. He slapped his face twice, then opened the desk drawer, extracted the ancient revolver, and tossed it into a corner.

"You're nothing but human garbage!" Kelly exclaimed, not releasing his grip. "A dope smuggler! Don't talk back to me or I'll decorate this office with your teeth!" Whereupon, he shoved the Bolivian unceremoniously into another corner of the office.

The small, soft, rice fed police arrived. Apologetically, they took Iparraguirre to jail, on suspicion. They mumbled something to him about "diplomatic necessity," a "misunderstanding" and "only a matter of a few hours at the most."

Kelly made a mental note to have the bank accounts of the local police force checked.

LATER in the morning, after trying to recruit the mayor (there was no U.S. Consul in Santa Cruz), Kelly returned with that unwilling dignitary to the town jail. They found the jailers in a trance and Iparraguirre dead. No trace of a wound. Cause of death unknown.

But outside the jail, Kelly alone was aware of sandaled footprints in the red earth, largely owing to the fact that he alone had an idea of what to look for. The footprints were not readily noticeable because they were positively Lilliputian. Maljarn was evidently still one step ahead of him! But close. Very close by.

"This killing is absolutely unexplainable," complained the mayor, his fat belly trembling with excitement. "What do you suggest, Señor Kelly?"

Kelly's dark eyes surveyed the local skies for weather and found that they were promising. "I suggest I take a ride in my helicopter," he answered.

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By noon he was aloft, heading northeastward over the lazy Rio Grande—bound for Santiago de Roboré and the Mission, where there was a man who knew something about Maljarn—and Jerry Fitzgerald—and a mystery man by the name of Garner.

He was unaware, at the time, that he carried a certain diminutive passenger in his baggage compartment. It was a simple matter for a man seven inches tall to hitch rides on airplanes. . . .

THE MISSION at Santiago was sixteen miles uphill from the Panagra emergency airport at Roboré. The entire village owed its origin to the missionaries, and its existence even now was dedicated solely to the purpose of Christian work and evangelical training of the native converts. There was an open square faced by a small white church, adobe walled school buildings, and the Mission Headquarters, a long, thatch-roofed adobe structure that dominated the village, as seen from the air.

Kelly came in toward it before sunrise. He could see it in the gray dawnlight. Beyond the square were short, grass-grown streets and small, thatch-roofed native houses. He caught sight of a corral or two and several head of cattle.

Beyond, the stubby jungle, or *montaña,* as it was called here, sloped gently upward toward the continuous ridge of some low mountains. Beyond the ridge the terrain dropped to flat, dense jungle that swept to the horizon, with the exception of a few rather startling ridges and peaks some twenty miles distant. Out there was the real savage territory—land of the Guarany, the Yanaigua and the Potorero, into which Garner had disappeared and from which Fitzgerald operated. Somewhere out there was a certain field of deadly poppies he intended to find. Somewhere out there was a place from which little men came in search of Radium D, killing with an alien science—and where the dark powers of *Ivya* could plunge a man into worse than death. Out there—also—was a space ship.

Before flying out there cold he intended to squeeze Dr. Mayban for information—all he could get.

Inasmuch as his was the first aircraft of any make or description actually to land at Santiago de Roboré, his arrival caused a very early turnout of the entire population, not excluding barking dogs, chattering monkeys, squealing pigs and one scandalized peacock. He settled the 'copter at the edge of the square right next to a large patch of sawgrass.

IT TOOK Kelly until noon to get Dr. Mayban warmed up to him sufficiently to be able to drop some of his camouflage and ask a few leading questions. They were, as the venerable missionary expressed it, "fellowshipping" around the noon lunch table out in back of the Mission Headquarters, under the welcome shade of a thatch-roofed arcade. Dr. Mayban sat there with him, a large,

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sturdily built, stern-faced patriarch —white hair, a red, weathered face that had known more than two decades of jungle sun and rain. His clear, blue eyes reminded Kelly of the Rock of Gibraltar. They were steady as a mountain when they looked at him. Yet, somehow, Kelly sensed a vague, shadowy something lingering in their depth—something akin to fear. But it was not fear, itself, because fear could not be associated with this fiery old servant of God. He gave the impression of being conscious of walking with his Maker, of possessing a faith that was impervious to fear. In Dr. Mayban's presence the dark laughter in Kelly's eyes subsided sullenly, but his will to pursue his goal remained.

"One hears strange tales concerning the jungles out here," Kelly said, waving his hand in the general direction of Guarany territory.

"Always," countered the other, noncommitally. The missionary cast a rather furtive glance at his hired man, Umberto, a *meztizo* carpenter and handy man hired years ago in Puerto Suarez. The latter humbly lowered his eyes and looked at his gnarled hands as though embarrassed.

"Didn't an American named Kiefer nearly lose his life out there recently?"

"Oh, you know about that?" said Mayban. Umberto paled and grew tense, still averting his eyes.

"Yes. I tried to interview him when he was returned to the United States. Poor devil! He was out of his mind—kept talking about Guarany country and referring to the 'powers of Satan.' Entirely delirious."

Kelly thought Umberto trembled. Mayban was still composed, though there was a nervous crispness to his words when he spoke. "Kiefer came up here determined to hunt peccaries in savage territory. He wanted a guide, but when I refused him on the grounds that we are not conducting a sportsman's lodge here he went in alone. Later, he showed up here with Potorero fever, just as you saw him. So we took him to Roboré and turned him over to the Panagra agent there."

Potorero fever my foot! Maljarn tells a different tale!

"Some whitemen have actually succeeded in settling out there in the wilderness, haven't they?"

Umberto looked up, startled, at Kelly, then at his employer. The latter answered too quickly, Kelly thought.

"You must be referring to Fitzgerald," he said, swiftly. "He's the only one we know of. Many have *died* out there, however."

"I was referring to a man named Garner—came here about twenty-five years ago and took some scientific equipment into the jungle. What ever became of him?"

Dr. Mayban tensed visibly this time. Umberto's brown eyes never left those of the missionary. Now the latter's answer came after too long a pause.

"I — don't recall — ever having heard the name."

"All right. What do you know

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about little men—about half a foot high—and I'm not talking about Leprechauns!" He drove the words in like a ramrod because he saw he was striking home with effect.

Dr. Mayban motioned Umberto to remain seated, inasmuch as the latter started springing to his feet. The Rock of Gibraltar look returned to his eyes as he impaled Kelly with an icy stare.

"Just who are you?" he asked. "And what is your real purpose in coming here?"

Kelly produced a slow smile. "The name is still the same, Dr. Mayban," he answered, tossing his real credentials on the table, "but the profession is different. I'm looking for Fitzgerald, who is wanted for opium producing and exporting, among other things. I am investigating this man Garner as a possible clue to why Radium D is so important to little men six inches high. One little fellow in particular killed a U.S. agent, a certain Peruvian named Molla, and a Bolivian named Iparraguirre. I was told you knew something about Garner, Fitzgerald, little men, and strange occurrences in the Guarany country. I am equipped to enter that region in search of Fitzgerald, but I need all the information I can get—and possibly a guide who speaks one or two of the savage languages. Will you cooperate with me in the name of the Law, or do I continue on my way with no help at all? And incidentally—maybe *you* could inoculate me against this—ah—'Potorero fever.' I don't intend to end up like Kiefer. You see—he was another agent, also looking for Fitzgerald."

Both men sat petrified and stared at him, but not with as much expression on their faces as Kelly would have preferred. Finally, Dr. Mayban replied.

"Of course, in view of your true identity as a representative of the United States Government, I would be only too glad to help you. But most of what you say is complete gibberish to me—except in the matter of Jerome Fitzgerald. I had always considered him to be a gold prospector and jungle trader. If you suspect him of this other activity, however, it is only my duty to aid you in locating him. The general direction of his camp is known to me. You should have no trouble finding it with your helicopter. I could even supply the guide. But I must warn you. Not only is Fitzgerald a strange, unpredictable man. He is dangerous, or would be, to those who attempted to interfere with him. He is, I am sorry to say, a madman."

"Madman? Why?"

"It's a madness that actually cements his relations with the savages. He shares their fantastic beliefs."

"What beliefs?" persisted Kelly.

This is where Ivya comes into the picture—he thought to himself.

Dr. Mayban fell silent for a moment, but Umberto started eagerly to fill in the details. "They believe in a living goddess who comes to them every few years. She is beautiful beyond the dreams of men and is supposed to have the powers of the

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Devil!"

"Umberto!" exclaimed Dr. Mayban. "Please be silent!"

Umberto's eyes were big, half filled with fear, half with a strange fanaticism—or was it cunning? "But Fitzgerald has *seen* her! He's in *love* with her! He does nothing but wait for her to return!"

Which explains Maljarn's dubiousness concerning Fitzgerald's friendship. Fitzgerald loves what Maljarn opposes.

"Return from where?" put in Kelly, swiftly.

"The stars—"

That proves it! There's a space ship all right! And it commutes periodically between worlds that can't be very distant from each other!

"Now who's talking gibberish?" Kelly glared at both of them. "Opium, madmen, a lost scientist named Garner, little men who murder to acquire Radium D—and now a goddess from the stars! What next!"

"Most of it is nonsense, of course," retorted Dr. Mayban, with a visible effort at control. His florid complexion had turned pale. "But all I can vouch for is that Fitzgerald lives in Guarany country."

"And you know nothing about little men?"

"Absolutely nothing."

Kelly had been fumbling under his chair with something. Now, suddenly, he slapped a small object on the table as though it were a hot potato.

"Then what do you know about *this!*"

In the deep shade of the arcade roof, the Flame Crystal glowed softly. Dr. Mayban rose to his feet and stared at it as though he were facing Satan. Umberto froze for one instant, eyes bugged out, sweating.

Kelly was aware of a dog barking somewhere. In a nearby jacqueranda tree a wild mackaw screeched importantly. Doves fluttered about the low, circular wall of the well in the yard near the arcade.

Then Umberto was running through the yard as fast as he could go, shouting. He was not shouting words. He was merely shouting, and at the top of his voice. . . .

THAT NIGHT, Kelly reduced Dr. Mayban to the point of further confessions.

"Your possession of the Flame Crystal," said the missionary, "proves to me that you are closer to this case than anyone has ever been in the past, except, perhaps, poor Kiefer. Since it is also likely that you will reach Fitzgerald there is even the remote possibility of your returning to civilization with him—or at least with a knowledge of some of the mysteries which surround him. For that reason I feel I should confide in you—on one condition."

He paused, watching Kelly's dark, laughing eyes. Through the window of Mayban's study drifted tropical sounds—nocturnal whisperings of the jungle. A cool breath of air, heavily laden with the indefinable perfume of these latitudes, drifted in about them.

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Since Kelly said nothing, he continued. "There are many pieces of information which law enforcement agencies of the government can keep out of the newspapers. This is one item which must *never* go beyond your government files. I want your word on it, Mr. Kelly."

Here's where I strike oil!

"That's to be taken for granted," Kelly answered. "We're after law breakers. Our business is not to furnish sensational news items for the papers. Let's have it!"

Dr. Mayban sighed resignedly. "Christ made a promise that he would return once the Gospel had been brought to the last tribe. That promise has always been one of the greatest motivations for missionaries."

"What in *His* name has that got to do with what I'm after?"

"You will see. I had a brother named Harold. Although he was not ordained he was an active Christian worker—even fanatical. In fact, more than fanatical. He acted as one who has received a Divine inspiration. I must also add that he was a scientific genius—a man of tremendous capacity for anything to which he set his mind. And he had set his mind to a great purpose, but one which I felt was unrealistic."

"Don't stop now," Kelly urged, watching the other's face warily.

"He believed that to bring the Gospel to the last tribe *on Earth* was not enough. There were people on other planets of this solar system to convert!"

Kelly coughed violently on his cigarette smoke. "Oh *no!*" He coughed again.

"Unusual as it may seem, that was his idea," said Mayban. "As you can readily understand, I had a lifetime reputation to protect and refused, of course, to be associated with the project—especially when he began seriously to perform research into the nature of gravitation, with the actual intention of building a space ship."

So the space ship is a terrestrial model, built by an Earthman! Then what of Ivya and Maljarn? The ship must have made a trip and they returned with it!

"You know, this is beginning to sound more and more like Garner."

Bridge across space, built by an evangelist, became Pandora's box!

"Precisely. When my brother achieved what he was after he feared that his discoveries would be confiscated and used for purposes of making war—or that other planets would become contaminated by our materialistic civilization, which he despised with megalomaniac passion."

"You are intimating that he actually discovered a means of overcoming gravitation."

"He claimed he had. I was already established here, and he wrote me, proposing to work in the jungle, out of sight of civilization. Our family left us a considerable estate, and my share had gone into missionary work. He had largely augmented his own share with incomes from various patents, and all of his own fortune was going into experimentations. When he insisted that I should not obstruct

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him in his Christian work, I could not deny him his rights, whatever my own opinion might be of his methods. I allowed him to come here, but I made him change his name, which he did. Few people knew he was my brother."

"So he went into the jungle and imported a raft of scientific equipment," said Kelly. "Then what happened?"

Dr. Mayban opened his palms. "He disappeared! I've never heard from him again."

Kelly leaned forward, his eyes narrowing suddenly. "Dr. Mayban, I am a trained investigator. I am not that gullible. There is more to this story than you have told me. You have more reasons than that for being so secretive about your brother. Besides, this makes no connection with Fitzgerald. What about him—and the little men, and Radium D, the Flame Crystals—and this business about a goddess? Either give me a connection for these things or offer a logical argument that would eliminate some of them as bunk—at least the goddess part, anyway! This case is nuttier than a fruit cake as it is without bringing in voodoo hocus pocus if we can possibly avoid it."

Dr. Mayban's florid face darkened with the effort to control his temper. "I don't like undue pressure, Mr. Kelly," he warned.

"Look!" said Kelly, leaning forward still farther. "You're a man of peace. I'm a representative of the Law. Inasmuch as we are both citizens of the same country you'll take orders from *me*."

Dr. Mayban's tenseness relaxed. "I am sorry," he said. "You must forgive me. We are under ecclesiastical law here, and I am the equivalent of mayor and chief of police. I have been so accustomed to giving the orders—"

"Don't digress! What's the real secret about your brother?"

"Mr. Kelly—you are in danger of your life," Mayban said. "Do not pursue this case any farther."

"Don't be naive! When I took the case do you think I was under the impression I was trying out for ping pong? Danger is my business, Dr. Mayban. Let me be the judge of what is advisable. Do you know what I think? I think your brother—this Garner—is still alive. And there's something about a dead missionary I'd like to investigate."

Unexpectedly, this produced the greatest reaction so far. Mayban flushed, then trembled visibly, his hands suddenly clenching into fists. They quickly he sighed and relaxed, with an obvious effort of will. "Think what you may," he said, his voice tense with emotion, "but from here on in—if you pursue this thing—I may not be able to protect you. You are going to come to grips with the physically manifested powers of Satan!"

Kelly took a long drag on his cigarette, exhaled slowly, never taking his eyes off of the missionary's face. "Are we back to the goddess again?"

Mayban nodded. "The goddess."

"Baloney!" He did not quite believe what he said on account of Kie-

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fer and Maljarn, but he could not resist expressing a certain measure of frustration at this point.

The two men stared at each other.

• • •

IN THAT moment, Maljarn walked into Dr. Mayban's study. He stood there in the middle of the floor. In his hand was a small tube. When he depressed a certain crystal at its base, other tube sections sprang out, forming a rod which began to glow with a soft light not unlike that of the Flame Crystal.

Dr. Mayban sprang to his feet, knocking over his chair. "Holy Mother of God!" he exclaimed, staring at the intruder. But only astonishment revealed itself in his clear, blue eyes. He was unafraid. Or—Kelly thought—was he acting?

Kelly merely sat where he was, looking at Maljarn's small sandals and thinking of Iparraguirre.

The little man addressed Kelly. "You give me, please, the Flame Crystal," he said—and Kelly wondered how he knew he had it. Maybe eavesdropping.

Mayban looked at Kelly. Kelly took time to extinguish his cigarette in an ash tray. He was amused to find himself putting out the cigarette with such meticulous care. Where in Hell's brick-walled half acre did little freaks like Maljarn grow? And how had he gotten here from Santa Cruz? They knew all about Flame Crystals and they killed to obtain Radium D. Why? *Why!*

"You appear to have the advantage," Kelly replied. "If you will just take it easy with that magic wand, I'll hand over what you're after. It's in the heel of my shoe." He bent down to untie his shoe.

What he really wanted was to get his shoulder behind Mayban's desk. As he did so, he heaved at it with all high strength and it fairly flew at Maljarn. Being made of cedar and somewhat infested with termites, it crashed with a very satisfying reverberation against the opposite wall and split apart, knocking pictures down with a bang.

In the same instant, Maljarn leaped agilely out of the way and the room filled with a golden light that brought dizziness to Kelly. Simultaneously, Dr. Mayban swung out at the golden rod with a Potorero *macana* he had snatched off the wall. The heavy, iron-wood sword shattered the mysterious weapon and effectively disarmed the alien.

Whereupon, the latter leaped at Mayban's throat, emitting a particularly blood-curdling war cry, a weird ululation and distortion of articulated sound that belonged clearly to thought and culture patterns born somewhere across the abyss of outer space. Surprisingly, Mayban was knocked off his feet by the impact, and Kelly saw the missionary struggling for his life at the hands of the little demon, who was trying to tear Mayban's throat open with his bare hands.

As Kelly saw blood on Mayban's neck, he lashed out with his foot and succeeded in dislodging the attacker.

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But then he yelled with pain, dancing on his good foot and holding the other.

"Ye gods! He's made of iron!"

Both men looked around, saw the little alien trying to climb out the window. In an instant, just as Mayban pointed, holding a bloody handkerchief to his neck, Kelly went out the window with the demon. Sounds of a fierce struggle emerged from the mission yard.

Umberto, Mayban's hired hand, plus three native boys and an Indian housekeeper, burst into the study in time to see their wounded director climb undecorously through the window with the deadly *macana* in his powerful hand.

"Come!" cried Umberto to the native boys. "The *padre* has been attacked by the American!"

Outside, both Kelly and Mayban were struggling with a little creature who seemed to be made of steel. All of a sudden, something struck Kelly on the head, and the heated struggle in the jungle night was eclipsed by a black nothingness. . . .

WHEN KELLY regained consciousness he was painfully aware of the sun and of a thunderous roaring in his ears. The sun was rising over the pagan hills of Guarany country, and the roaring was that of the helicopter engine. He lay sprawled out in the passenger seat, and Dr. Mayban sat at the controls. A fresh bandage was on his neck where Maljarn had mauled him.

Kelly did not move. He merely lay motionless where he was and watched Mayban.

Then he said, "So you're taking me there."

Mayban looked over at him quickly, probing into Kelly's dark eyes that had started their silent laughter all over again.

And Kelly added, "Convenient the way you missionaries take to aviation —all of a sudden like."

Mayban's reply was short-clipped and to the point. "I have flown for years. Took training for helicopter operation as I had intended to get one for my work here. I have decided to take you to Fitzgerald without any further delay."

"I'll say there's no delay! I just came to!"

"You're really recovering from a sedative I gave you last night. I've been looking after you. Don't worry."

"Looking after me, eh? Thanks. Is that why you're wearing the only parachute I've got?"

Mayban's jaw clamped tight as he watched the jungle ahead. "If I had to bail out, you'd be with me. No use putting a parachute on an unconscious man."

"No, but—where have you got all this machinery hidden—*doc?*"

The 'copter wobbled as Mayban started, then stared, at Kelly. "What are you talking about?"

"Some soldiers recently got too nosey around your headquarters and saw some of it. You chased them out —then trailed them and klobbered them with that *macana* in order to blame it on the Potoreros. Your giv-

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ing me that tap with the *macana* has knocked more ideas into my head than out. Perhaps *you're* the Master Mind, Mayban. Just what *did* happen to Garner?"

Mayban was pale, but the Rock of Gibraltar look was back. "You're still out of your head. Umberto did not know about Maljarn. He thought you were attacking me. Unfortunately, he struck you, and Maljarn escaped."

"Or would you say Maljarn is on board *with* us?" retorted Kelly.

Mayban turned his face toward him and yelled. "For the love of God, man, straighten yourself out! You're raving! I'm trying to make up for everything by giving you a helping hand. I'm taking you to Fitzgerald!"

"Then," said Kelly, slowly straightening up in his seat, "would you answer a couple of questions?"

"Of course!"

"What do you know about that little fiend? Ever seen him before?"

"Never! And I can still hardly believe it!"

Kelly was fully erect in his seat. "Then how the hell did you know his name was Maljarn?"

Mayban came at him instantly, powerful hands seeking his throat, and the helicopter wobbled out of tune as Kelly fought back. Mayban was strong and clever, but Kelly had been through this mill many times before. He guarded, struck and clipped with superior skill.

Suddenly, Mayban lunged backward and fell out, while the 'copter soared crazily. Kelly grabbed the controls and looked down. He saw the 'chute belly out and settle on the wind, taut with the missionary's dangling weight.

Dead ahead were several low mountains rising somberly out of the jungle's green mat. He flew onward about seven miles until he was over the base of the mountains. Actually, he was looking for the tell-tale gleam of a space-ship, but all he saw was a group of old sheds overgrown with jungle. Surrounding these was a broad, cultivated field blooming with flowers.

Poppies. . . .

"Fitzgerald," he said aloud and somewhat through his teeth, "you're having company in for tea today!"

Grimly, he hummed a ludicrously dainty little tune as he slanted downward toward the clearing.

He thought: Maljarn was no friend of Mayban's, I guess. At least that chomp at his throat wasn't exactly friendly. But Mayban knows plenty about that little devil. Plenty about everything! Haven't seen the last of the "Doc" yet, but that's ducky. I'll take care of him in due time.

Suddenly, he groped for the heel of his left shoe. The secret compartment was wide open. The lead plug had not even been replaced.

Well, the Flame Crystal had more or less served its purpose. But who the hell had it now? Mayban? Maljarn? Umberto?

His proximity to the poppy field caused him to start concentrating on a landing and his imminent meeting

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with the so-called "madman," Fitzgerald. He wondered if Kiefer had ever come this far . . .

AFTER he turned off his engine and got out of the helicopter, he knelt down in the broad field and hurriedly looked at a few of the poppies. They were typical of the Asiatic species, *papaver somniferum*. He squeezed a couple of unripened capsules and felt the alkaloid milk, sticky like milkweed sap, ooze between his fingers. The field was ready for harvest. He could imagine Chief Johnston drooling over this red-handed evidence. Out of force of habit, he picked a few and placed them in a compartment inside the ship.

He was about to get out his camera when something brought him to an abrupt halt. He stopped, turned slowly around, and surveyed the distant walls of the sunlit jungle. The sky was clear blue. The air was hot, reflecting the already baking earth. Somewhere far away he heard the screeching of macaws.

Aside from that single, soporific sound there was none other. The unusual silence put him in mind of wild West stories where the scout and leader of the wagon train warns his followers that sudden silence in the woods is a sure sign of Indians. He remembered suddenly that he was in the middle of Guarany country.

Quickly, then, he turned to the ship and brought out his tommygun, checked its magazine, and then also pulled out a belt that supported six hand grenades. He put this on, also checking his automatic for ammunition.

When he turned again toward the sheds and the jungle the old laughter was back in his deep-set, black eyes. He started walking, straight-shouldered, directly toward the sheds, the tommygun resting at his hip, a tense finger on the trigger.

When he came within easy calling distance, he stopped. He was not much afraid of arrows, but he figured Fitzgerald might be in there looking out at him along a gun barrel.

"All right!" he yelled. "Come on out or I'll open fire!"

Silence.

He did not like the silence.

"Come on, Fitzgerald! Out in the open!"

More silence.

Then—Kelly split the silence with a loud burst of tommygun fire, aiming high along the vine grown windows of the buildings. Birds and monkeys set up a brief clamor in the jungle, but soon they were silent again.

"Hey!" came a startled voice from inside, belatedly. "What the hell's going on out there!"

Kelly dropped to one knee, aiming tensely at the nearest shed, from which the voice had emanated.

Slowly, a man appeared in the doorway. He did not come out. Kelly looked him over and then got slowly to his feet, lowering his weapon as he did so. A knowing and almost disillusioned expression was on his face.

Jerome Fitzgerald was drunk, almost to the point of incapacitation. In his left hand was a half-emptied

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quart of whiskey. He slumped, leaning against one side of the door, straining with the effort to stand up, squinting painfully at the brightness outside.

He was tall, taller than Kelly by several inches. Kelly could think of nothing more apt than a description of Ichabod Crane from Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow:* "He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served as shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together." This was Fitzgerald, with the addition that his pale, brown eyes were small and close together. His long, sandy-colored hair dangled over his forehead. He was pale—one of those types who never tan—but was almost disfigured with a broad splattering of freckles. His nose was short but wide. His mouth was big and loose, his chin small and his long neck all Adam's apple. His ears protruded from the sides of his head almost pathetically. When he grimaced in his efforts to see Kelly, he exposed a ragged row of buck teeth.

"Who's that?" queried Fitzgerald. "What t'hell's the idea shootin' up the place? No goddam savages in here. If you're a whiteman and you speak English I don't care who you are. Come on in an' have a drink!"

Thus Fitzgerald—the "madman" master mind of an interplanetary plot whom Kelly had trailed from one hemisphere into another. Somebody was covering up somewhere—and the finger of suspicion pointed ever more insistently at Mayban.

He went inside the rustic shed and joined Fitzgerald in a drink. It was good Red Label Scotch, and he felt that he could use it.

Because he had been under a prolonged nervous tension, and outside it was still too silent all around. . . .

AT FIRST Fitzgerald played games like Iparraguirre and Mayban, even in his drunken stupor, but since he could not deny the evidence of the poppy field he had to admit having a direct connection with opium traffic.

When Kelly played his own game in return, explaining who he was and that he had come to take him in, Fitzgerald got drunker, more inarticulate—then broke down.

"Mayban made me do it!" he moaned. He was sprawled across the crude mahogany table, his head in his arms. "You see?" he murmured, as though addressing himself out of long established habit. "Never could succeed at nothin'—not even crime—even if it *was* for a decent cause!"

"*Why* did Mayban make you do it?" asked Kelly. "How could a good cause be achieved at the price of a crime like narcotics smuggling? What's more—how can Mayban force you? What's holding you here?"

"I'm wanted in the States—escaped convict. Got no passport. Man without a country—that's me." He raised his head to look at Kelly, bleary-eyed. "But it was a frame-up! I didn't do anything!"

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Kelly assumed the other might have been wanted under some alias. There had been no record on Jerome Fitzgerald. He had searched the name down, himself. No record, that is, with the exception of his connection with Case Four Seven Four. Kelly sized him up as a good-natured oaf who was perfect catspaw material for anybody who cared to use him.

"So Mayban furnishes the hideout and you take orders. How come a missionary stoops to indulge in the Devil's traffic of opium?"

"He's got to have money—lot's of it!"

"Why? To buy machinery? What's he trying to do, repair a space ship or build a new one?"

Fitzgerald started, drew himself together, and staggered to his feet, staring at Kelly in sobering amazement. "How in hell did you know that!" he shouted.

"Sit down, Jerry. I know a lot of things. But I want to know what you know—about Kiefer, Munson, Radium D, Flame Crystals, Maljarn, space ships, and a goddess named *Ivya*—"

Fitzgerald had been tensing for some kind of action, but when Kelly mentioned *Ivya,* he slumped and sat down. By a herculean effort of will, he collected his wits and concentrated on Kelly with his bleary little pale brown eyes.

"Listen!" he pleaded. "You can't turn me in now! I want to tell you a story."

"I'm listening."

"Well, it's a normal yarn that you can understand, up to the point where —well, before that point I had nothing to live for and now I have. I wasn't born with no silver spoon in my mouth. I come out of an orphanage and hit the streets. Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, out West and back again—just working or bumming. Did a stretch in the Navy, too, and some more with the Merchant Marine. I learned a smattering of everything but never was real good at nothin'. Prospecting, geology, mining, steel mills, farming. In the Navy I was electrician's mate, worked on Diesels, generators, then switched to Communications. Had a smattering of steam-fitting and plumbing, stuff like that. Then in Chicago I fell for a girl, and she told me what I was doing wasn't big time enough. So I got mixed up with the rackets. I turned out to be a fall guy for my 'girl friend's' real boyfriend and took a rap, then joined a planned prison break. It's still a long story, but I ended up here working for Mayban. You may not believe it, but I didn't know opium come from these kind of poppies. Mayban told me it was medicine stuff. When I found out the truth it was too late. There was too much involved.

"Chapter Two of this book I'm tellin' you starts with Mayban coming to me and telling me about his twin brother, Garner."

"*Twin* brother!" Kelly's eyes narrowed, his active mind racing along new channels instantly.

"Yeah. Maljarn knew them both and the idea of twins don't register

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with him. Since he knew Garner first he calls Mayban Garner."

Kelly closed his eyes in pained bewilderment, shook his head once, then reopened his eyes and looked at Fitzgerald.

"Where is Garner now?"

"On Mars." Fitzgerald watched Kelly for the effect of this information.

To his disappointment, Kelly did not bat an eyelash. He merely poured himself another drink. Fitzgerald thought he saw the other's hand tremble in the pouring, but he could not be sure.

"I think I know about that part," Kelly told him. "Garner wanted to convert the Martians to Christianity."

"Yeah. But that's when all hell broke loose. Maybe there's one thing you didn't know. Garner cracked before he left for Mars. Got so inspired with his own ideas he decided to play God."

"What do you mean?"

"There was no love lost between him and this world. He hated Earth. Wanted to start a new world of his own—a new Garden of Eden."

"With no Adam and Eve?"

"That's just it! He took them along!"

Kelly set his glass down hard. "Come again?" He had forgotten about the ominous silence of the jungle.

"Garner kidnapped Mayban's son and daughter. He wanted to keep them free of any contamination with Earthy ideas and make them the parents of a new and purer race. You know—crackpot stuff like that. The guy had just lost his marbles, that's all."

"No wonder Mayban will stop at nothing to get to Mars. What did he do—find Garner's plans and start a ship of his own?"

"Guess that's the way it was. I came in on the scene after he had started and now I'm his man Friday on that, too. He ships me stuff, makes inspections once in a while, but I'm supposed to put it all together according to his blueprints. The ship is almost completed."

Fitzgerald tensed, thinking of something that should have occurred to him sooner. "Where is that ship?" He was thinking of Mayban, only five or six miles away.

"I'll show it to you, but first let me finish the story. I gather from Mayban that Garner did start preachin' Christianity on Mars. There was two kinds of people—one kind like this Maljarn—and another kind about like us only maybe just a shade smaller—sorta like these savages. Well, Maljarn's kind fell for religion like they'd been hit between the eyes—you know, the idea of life after death, man having a soul and all that. But the other race revolted. They had some powerful priests and a strange god who had been 'asleep' for hundred of years. With him, or *it*, asleep the priests had no power, and they needed a special kind of radioactive stuff to wake him or it up. Mars hadn't had that stuff for centuries, but they found a little radium

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in the instrument dials on Garner's ship and aged it enough to get the brand of radioactivity they needed. Seems they have crystals that react to the stuff in various ways according to how they regulate the resistance of the crystals or something. They can paralyze you, kill you, or hypnotize you for months."

"You are no doubt referring to Radium D," put in Kelly. "Could the mysterious power or god you mention be called *Sunn-lal?*"

Fitzgerald's big mouth dropped agape, unbecomingly. "Say! You *do* known plenty! Where'd you hear about that?"

"Maljarn and I have met."

Fitzgerald sprang to his feet, wild hope gleaming in his eyes. Maljarn! Have you seen him? Has he come back at last?"

Kelly eyed the other carefully. "Back from where?"

"Back from the States! With that stuff—that Radium D! He swore he'd hi-jack it!"

"Hi-jack it? From whom?"

"From *Ivya*. That's what brings her here. She and her priests must have Radium D, to maintain their power!"

"Now wait a minute! This is as clear as mud. I understand you're head over heels for this *Ivya* wench. If she needs Radium D, why are you so glad that her enemy, Maljarn, has gotten hold of it?"

"Because he'll bring it here ahead of schedule. He wants it for his own people. But his only way back to Mars is either to smuggle himself on board the goddess's ship like he did when he came here, or to go on Mayban's new ship. One way or the other he's bound to show up here, and when he does I'll get it from him and give it to *Ivya*." His small eyes were bright with enthusiasm. "How did you contact Maljarn?"

"That's beside the point," said Kelly. "The puzzling thing is, Maljarn thinks you might be his friend."

"I am! I'm going to work with him, to help him and his people."

Kelly took a big breath, counted ten, then swore. "Now listen! Mayban knows Maljarn, too. He will naturally be on Maljarn's side, won't he, since Maljarn and his people are converts? Your working for *Ivya* makes you an enemy to both!" Kelly's brain was whirling, remembering also the struggle between Maljarn and Mayban that he, himself, had witnessed. Who was what and why?

"Not necessarily," Fitzgerald argued. "You see, *Ivya* is a Martian mispronunciation of Yvonne—originally Yvonne Mayban."

Now Kelly's much more becoming mouth dropped open. "You mean—"

"What else?" interrupted Fitzgerald. "The Martian priests of this ancient god kidnapped Mayban's daughter *and* the boy. The ransom was Radium D. When Garner did not produce, they killed the boy. But in the meantime they had made *Ivya*—Yvonne, that is—into some sort of goddess who was possessed by the power of—what did you call it?"

"Sunn-lal."

"Yeah. Soon Lall. That's it! Now

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there's the difference between Maljarn and me. He believes he can destroy the power of Soon Lall by destroying *Ivya*. I keep tellin' him he's all wet. We gotta get at Soon Lall, himself, or itself, whatever it is. *Ivya* is just an innocent victim of the circumstances. When she's under 'the influence' she don't know what she's doing and don't remember it afterward.

"The priests, or maybe it was Soon Lall, made the girl use what knowledge Garner had given her and bring the space ship back to Earth in search of Radium D. This was some years later when she had become a young woman. She left Garner stranded and came back here to the spot where she took off from. To her this was home. She had been raised here. But instead of contacting her father, Mayban, she contacted the Guarany. She had been taught their language at the mission in her childhood. They worshipped her as a goddess, too, when she returned. In fact, she had put their Big Chief under a spell with a Flame Crystal. When she gave him a small sample of Radium D and said she wanted a lot more before he could get a second crystal, he came to me because he knew I was shipping secret stuff to the States through Mayban. In return he offered gold—plenty of it. Mayban went for the gold idea and cooperated. In fact, those Guarany have paid off in plenty of gold for both previous shipments of Radium D."

Kelly interrupted. "I understand you know this *Ivya*, yourself."

A wonderful expression, as of immeasurable inspiration, leaped into Fitzgerald's eyes. "Yes!" he exclaimed. "I know her. I met her on her second trip back to Earth."

"Didn't Mayban try to intercept her and get the ship?"

"Ha! *Did*. he! She's his daughter, isn't she? He tried everything in the book—but you don't know the power she has!"

"What about Kiefer? Did he run into her?"

"You bet your life he did! He was a tough customer but too cock-sure of himself. He intercepted the last shipment of Radium D just before it got to her. Fought the Guarany and actually took it away from them. But then *she* stepped in. And that was all. Kiefer was lucky to get out alive, because what she was doing to him—" Fitzgerald shuddered.

"I saw Kiefer after his return to the States," said Kelly.

"Then you've got a faint idea. But let me tell you how I met her. One morning I was out hunting and I found her swimming in a pool. Just as simple as that. She has two personalities. One is her own. It is that of a sweet child who has never been kissed. The other—" Again, he shuddered. "Well, let's skip *that*. The point is, when I found her she was herself. Naked and unashamed, like I guess Eve was supposed to be before she ate the apple. Beautiful as the whole damned jungle when the morning sun is drinking the dew off the orchids and the birds of Paradise are striking their colors. I can't de-

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:ribe it!" Tears came to his eyes. [e shook his head, reached for the lmost empty bottle of Scotch. "I :ll in love with her in a split second," e said. "Of course she only thinks 'm another monkey out of the trees s far as her interest in me is con-erned, but man or monkey I'm ad-icted to her, I'll live for her and 'll die for her, even if she's the one 'ho kills me!" He swallowed the regs of the bottle and shuddered as ough with a sob. "There's nothing lse in my life that really counts. I ever knew no beauty before. She's ll them things a man can't put into 'ords, the soft, strong, sentimental hings a guy's ashamed to admit he's hinking." His chin came forward, is muscles tensed, and he impaled Kelly with a murderous stare. "But I on't give a damn who knows it ow!" he exclaimed, explosively.

Kelly surveyed him unemotionally. Your story is a bit vague, as yet," e said. "How did James Munson the Third get hold of those Flame Crys-als?"

"Oh, when *Ivya* found out I was he real go-between out here she gave ne a couple and instructed me to use hem. On Mars those crystals seem to e something like money, only *big*. She handed them out like they was ach a million dollar note. Mayban icked like hell at first about ship-ing the crystals because they were adioactive and actually poisoned the pium we shipped them in, but when e foresaw the gold loot we could xtract from the Guarany in exchange for serving Radium D to the goddess he gave in."

"Even though he knew Radium D would serve to build up a satanic power opposed by Garner's Christian-ity on Mars."

"Yes, because he was counting heavily on his own ship. Still is. It's a space-going fort. He thinks if he can get to Mars in that he'll straight-en everything out—find Garner, de-stroy the priests, and bring back *Ivya* as Yvonne, herself."

"This is all still too mixed up for me. You said you and Maljarn were going to work together. What did you mean by that?"

"Now *there* is an interesting story in itself," Fitzgerald began. "Mal-jarn's people are really not from Mars, you know. They are old time refugees from the fifth planet and used to be quite the boys with science. Maljarn really came here in search of a certain key that will, he says, unlock the ancient scientific secrets of his race, and once he and his kind get back on their feet, scientifically speaking, he feels they can knock Soon Lall for a loop. Funny part is, he thinks *I* have that key! What he means is this—"

AT THAT moment, an arrow fully six feet long shot through a side window and just grazed Kelly's fore-head on its way toward the opposite wall, where it embedded itself with a heavy "thunk!" and stuck fast, quivering ominously.

In an instant, Kelly was crouched by the window, spraying the adjacent jungle with tommygun fire. He fired

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long and mercilessly into the green foliage, while Fitzgerald studied him curiously.

"I thought these Guarany were friends of yours!" exclaimed Kelly, turning momentarily toward the other.

Fitzgerald was on his feet, a 45 calibre automatic in his hand. "Those aren't Guarany out there," he answered. "Did you take a good look at that arrow? Only the Yanaiguas make those babies! I guess there's a war on. They fear and hate the goddess. It's local politics between the medicine men and they've worked up their tribe against the Guarany. Word has gotten around that *she* is returning. We'll have to get out of here, as I know the Yanaiguas consider me as one of the Guarany big medicine men. How about your helicopter?"

"How about Mayban's space ship?" said Kelly.

"I'll take you there. If I can't intercept Maljarn here I know he'll show up there. Come on!"

When they ran for the helicopter, stumbling over the rows of poppies which were by now a minor issue, long Yanaigua arrows thudded into the ground ahead of them. Kelly turned twice and spattered the jungle with tommygun fire. Three long arrows quivered in the fuselage of the helicopter, but no vital parts had been damaged.

One minute later, they were in the air, and the colorful poppy field spun away beneath them. Fitzgerald directed Kelly to skirt the base of the mountain toward the East.

"Look!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, suddenly. "It's the ship!"

Kelly looked, and his scalp tingled from the excitement of seeing it at last. He could feel the nervous perspiration breaking out all over him. A *space ship!*

It hovered over the jungle about a mile to the East, then drifted slowly downward. To Kelly it looked like a medium sized submarine, with an observation blister in the place of a conning tower and small batteries of rockets at either end. The rocket motors were not functioning, and Kelly reasoned that since the ship nullified gravity the rockets were only used for acceleration and deceleration in deep space.

"How the hell did Mayban get to it before we did?" he queried. "He's the only other one around here who can run it, isn't he?"

"That isn't Mayban's ship!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, never taking his eyes from it.

Kelly stared at him. "You mean—it's the goddess?"

"Yes! *Ivya* has come back to me—safe! Thank God!"

The sincerity and concern in Fitzgerald's voice brought home to Kelly the stark reality of the situation. In science fiction, space ships passed between worlds with the facility of wishful thought. But here was a real ship that had, several times, actually traversed the inconceivable gulf of emptiness between Earth and Mars, in eternal night and airless cold that was simultaneously blinding day and inescapable heat, running the gamut

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of deadly cosmic radiation and gambling with the mathematics of probability where it came to invisibly swift meteors. If Fitzgerald believed Yvonne Mayban to be the innocent victim of circumstances, and if he loved her as he claimed he did, Kelly could appreciate his feelings as they flew toward the slowly settling ship.

His thoughts of Yvonne Mayban as a naked little lovely swimming in a pristine jungle pool, humble, sweet, and innocent of a lover's kiss, suddenly faded as he remembered Kiefer's scar-tissue eyes and his fear-haunted admonition to avoid this "power of Satan."

He thought of alien things now—Maljarn, the priests of Mars, of the *mysterious god-power, Sunn-lal,* and the Country of the Other Life.

He also thought of how it would be to own such a ship, himself, and pick up a few hundred Flame Crystals. . . .

"Think Garner might have copped that ship and made it back here instead of *Ivya?"* he asked.

"Garner could be on board—but I doubt it. They're probably holding him prisoner somewhere on Mars—or he's dead."

Dead. "The missionary is dead." Those were Kiefer's words. What missionary? Kelly was about to ask a leading question when a Yanaigua arrow suddenly struck home. It pierced the gas tank. Gasoline was all over the fuselage in an instant.

"How the hell—" Kelly started to say, as he cut the engine.

"They can shoot high," interrupted Fitzgerald. "They lie on their backs and hold the giant bows between their feet. You better land before we go up in smoke!"

"Right! You better keep that tommygun handy." Kelly slid the helicopter down recklessly, like a falling leaf. "I'll try to get as close as possible to the space ship."

They could see the dark hull of the old ship settling between the trees not half a mile from their position. Above the "whoosh!" of the windmilling 'copter they heard now the mingling of savage voices—a mixture of war cries and weird, musical chanting.

"The Guarany are preparing to receive their goddess," said Fitzgerald. "They're fighting off the Yanaiguas at the same time!"

"We seem to be crashing quite a party!" quipped Kelly, as they swooped dangerously low above orchid laden trees.

The helicopter struck branches, lurched heavily, swirled around violently, and Kelly's head hit the metal upright between the craft's two windshields. He was aware of coming to a jarring halt, facing downward into the soft embankment of a small stream, under heavy foliage. With his thoughts wavering away into darkness, he thought he saw Maljarn tumble onto the ground beside Fitzgerald's prostrate form. Fitzgerald lay face downward and Maljarn began examining him.

So the little devil *had* hooked a ride, after all!

Before he drifted into unconsciousness, he had a vivid impression of a

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human skeleton, half disinterred by the action of the stream below him and owing also to the impact of the helicopter against the loose bank.

He saw the skull, grinning up at him, and in his wandering state of mind it seemed that the hollow eyes bore an expression of mute supplication—to him—as though the dead-man would have transmitted a vital message to him if he were equipped to speak.

"The missionary is dead."

Was *this* the lost, dead missionary? The forehead was high, certainly not the savage type. And another thing—the cause of death was quite apparent. The skull was weirdly cracked and lopsided, as though it had been struck a vicious blow across the left temple—with a Potorero *macana!*

Kelly heard savages shouting nearby. Then he passed out. . . .

WHEN he regained consciousness, he knew he was lying on his back in some sort of metal bunk. He felt a trembling in the frame supporting the mattress and he heard ponderous machinery churning away below the deck.

Deck! He was on board a space ship! Low, curved ceiling of metal criss-crossed with heavy conduits and compressed air lines. Light bulbs flickering dimly with low cycle current. The faint hiss of an oxygen valve. . . .

He might have sat up and taken full cognizance of his surroundings but for the heavenly vision leaning over him. Without recourse to deductive logic, he was aware that, incontrovertibly, this was *Ivya!*

Hair of gleaming bronze cascading across soft, pale shoulders that any goddess would have been proud to own. A face that was woman in the philosophical ultimate sense—large, soft blue eyes with heavy lashes and an endlessness of warm promise in elusive yet naively earnest depths; a small, adolescent nose and a full-lipped, expressive mouth that smiled down at him with an ingenious display of small, gleaming white teeth and sheer admiration.

She wore a loose robe that might have been spun of pale blue glass, drawn in only at the slender waist by a golden belt that ended in crystal-encrusted tassles. Beneath the semi-transparent robe he was aware of deep, soft breasts whose perfect outlines were seen as through the gossamer haze of moonlit dreams.

Had he been a narcotics addict, he reflected, he could not have conjured up a more exciting vision.

"You're so beautiful!" she told him, softly, in a smoky sort of tone and accent.

He suddenly remembered that all women sighed over his good looks. But he resented her telling him this more than he had resented female admiration at any other time in his life. It raised a barrier between him and her owing to long response training to a stimulus that in his playboy existence had become stereotyped. Sensing it, she was more adamant than before, leaning so lose to him that he felt her warm breath upon him.

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For one fleeting moment, something real and beautiful had entered his life—something he desired with a consciousness of being willing to sacrifice self for the sake of another. But her unexpected remark had closed a door on that haunted and lonely chamber of his soul. And it made him mad. Mad at her, and mad at himself for recognizing the subjective causes of his frustration.

He sat up then and looked around him at the little, cramped room that had obviously been designed for just what it was now—a bunk room. At the same time, *Ivya* rose to her feet, and he noticed that she was about five feet two, about twenty-three, and possessed of a figure that stirred his blood in spite of his resentment.

"Dammit!" he said. "I should be telling *you* you're beautiful!"

She beamed, overwhelmingly radiant. "Then why do you not say so?" she countered.

Kelly got to his feet, determined to keep his wits and preserve at least a modicum of mastery over his own fate. So this was Yvonne Mayban, taken to Mars as a child, obsessed by an unearthly, satanic power, and turned into a Trilby goddess—this was the girl with the double personality, with a child's naivete on her lips and alien hell in her haunted mind and spirit. No wonder Fitzgerald was so in love with her and determined to rescue her from her enslavement!

"Where is Jerry Fitzgerald?" he queried. "And Maljarn?"

Her small face clouded over with mixed emotions. Resentment, fear—guilty conscience. Certainly not the emotions of a goddess, but rather those of an innocent child who fears it has made an unwise move in relation to a vital decision. Kelly was aware of appeal here, of a girl subconsciously pleading for emancipation from a deadly spell that had been cast upon her due to no fault of her own.

"I—I locked them up," she said.

"Where? Are they alive?"

"Yes. Alive. But Maljarn is an enemy. He has Grillinn and will not give it to *Ivya*. He wishes to kill *Ivya*."

Grillinn. That was what Maljarn called Radium D. So he actually *did* bring the stuff with him!

"And Fitzgerald?"

"He is with Maljarn. I don't know if he is friend or enemy."

"Look, *Ivya!* I'm a logical fellow. Let me try to make sense of all this. You came to Earth in search of Radium D—I mean, this grillinn. Maljarn has it. Why didn't you take it from him? Why do you keep him or Fitzgerald on board at all, since they both use up oxygen? Why am *I* here, for that matter? And where are we headed for—Mars?"

A dark, chilling shadow was in *Ivya's* eyes for a moment, as though a powerful, alien personality lurked within, ready to destroy any obstacle in its path. But just as suddenly as it appeared, it disappeared behind the layer of innocence that concealed her more lethal personality.

"Everything happened so fast,"

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she answered. "The Yanaiguas were surrounding us. My Guarany could not hold them off, and I could not—*change*—so many of them."

"Change? What do you mean, change them—into what?" He shuddered, remembering Kiefer.

The elusive shadow flickered again in her eyes. "That is not for you," she answered. "You—are different. You are not for changing. You are for—for—" She lowered her eyes.

"For what?"

"For love. The *Voice* tells me—you and I must—be one." She blushed like an embarrassed child and hung her head.

"Oh, so now there's a Voice, is there?" He started to grow belligerent, but a sudden idea stayed him. If favoritism was working to his advantage, why not make the most of it? He wondered if the unknown element he would have to contend with was a separate mentality in this doll-like woman—or merely a blind, unintelligent power. If the latter, could he counteract it with a strong masculine appeal to her entirely naked womanly instincts? If the former, could he outwit it?

Anything was worth a try.

"*Ivya,*" he said, in a softer tone of voice. "Come here." He opened his arms.

A childish delight brightened her face. She came to him and he put his arms around her. At the same time an electric thrill shot through him. She was vibrantly alive.

He looked down into her eyes and saw her stark body in sudden mo- of an Adam's Eve

derment and alarm. "You have never been kissed?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No."

So he kissed her, and he felt her virgin lips tremble, then yield, and her arms went around his neck. For one long moment he was aware of holding close to him all the hidden ideals and dreams of his frustrated adolescence—things he had never believed possible of fulfillment.

Then, in the next instant, as his lips still pressed against hers, he was aware of being too close to a colossal, nameless *Thing*—an ancient, alien force, feminine in character, but overwhelmingly powerful. He was at grips with *Sunn-lal.* There came a fleeting impression of teetering on the brink of a tremendous gulf where—far away—he saw twice ten thousand souls blended helplessly into one great, writhing, hungering synthesis that reached out for him, pleadingly, desperately. *Sunn-lal* was Woman, Ultimate Woman, appealing to one, finite man, because she was lonely in her ageless power and sought expression for superhuman passion that would be death to him. And he knew why this "Voice" had directed *Ivya* to mate with him—in order to fulfill a monstrous, frustrated desire through the girl's mortal flesh. Her nails dug into his neck and shoulders and he felt her teeth on his lips, making him all the more aware of the infinitely older and vastly experienced entity that controlled Yvonne Mayban—for such knowledge of life could not belong to this young Eve

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With a maximum effort of will, he rejected her, though it seemed that it came close to costing him his life to do so.

FOR ONE fleeting, insane moment he had the impression that *Ivya* had been replaced by a greenish shadow out of which a pair of Satanic eyes glowed with the ultimate fury of the Ultimate Woman, scorned. In the same swift moment the shadow vision faded, but he was aware of a titanic effort toward self-composure, wounded ego and vanity regaining balance through the generation of contempt for him. This, followed by a treacherous smile backed by millenia-old evil wisdom.

Then he was looking at *Ivya* once more. He could not really call her Yvonne Mayban until she became liberated from her monstrous, supernatural parasite. In her present state she was a Trilby goddess, a combination of subjective hell and objective innocence. Consciously, she was a child whose normal mental growth had been arrested.

She looked at him now in hurt and frightened bewilderment. "Why do you stare at me like that?" she asked him. "Do you hate me?"

He gritted his teeth. What a weapon! *Sunn-lal* utilized a child's helpless innocence to trap intended victims!

"No," he said, "how could I? You're the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life."

"Then why did you push me away?" She took a step nearer and he saw genuine tears in her eyes.

"Because," he lied, "I have a million questions and there are things to be done, sweetness. I've never been on a space ship before. I'd like to know how far we've gone, what the stars look like, how this ship runs, where you've been refueling and replenishing your oxygen supplies—and what about Fitzgerald and Maljarn? Behind us on Earth there's your father, Mayban, who may trail us immediately in the new ship he's built. Ahead of us lies Mars with two races of people engaged in mortal revolt against opposed ideologies, and maybe there's Garner, who started it all, still waiting to be rescued. All that's got to be thought over and a proper plan of action worked out—and I would like to know what you know about Flame Crystals—as *well* as where you put my tommygun and grenades."

Ivya's perfect little brows wrinkled in puzzlement. "I—learned your language, I think, long ago," she said, "when I was a child. You speak too fast and I do not understand everything at once. You speak of my father and call him Mayban." She had a far away look in her eyes. "I do not know his name, nor do I remember my mother."

"Well, you may be glad to know that your father is alive and that he intends to follow you in his own ship and rescue you and your uncle, Garner."

"I—hardly understand you." Now her eyes acquired a glazed look, but her shoulders went back, imperiously,

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and her small chin and pointed breasts came into prominence. "I am *Ivya,* priestess of *Sunn-lal,* who dwells in *Korung-lal.*" Her eyes turned Heavenward, or Marsward, he could not tell which, as though she has uttered the most sacred words in the language of her adopted planet.

"That's all Martian to me," he answered. But he did recognize the word, "*Sunn-lal.*" And "*Korung-lal.*" Ergo, *Ivya* was Priestess of the Living Flame (or something) which dwelled in the Country of the Other Life. He felt like he wanted to shudder, but he controlled himself. No use showing the evil entity within *Ivya* that he feared her. Hell!—he thought to himself—I don't fear any damn woman anywhere, and I don't care how old she is!

Deliberately, Kelly's deep-set eyes probed behind the girl's, searching out the lurking shadow that obsessed her. He thought of her: *Once a woman always a woman.*

And in his eyes *Sunn-lal* was definitely surprised to find—dark laughter. . . .

AS THOUGH deliberately attempting to gain his confidence, to dissolve the wall of his inhibition toward her and draw him imperceptibly into the web-like pattern of her own plans, the power which moved *Ivya* permitted the girl to show Kelly the ship and tell him all that he wished to know. Far from being unaware of this "jui-jitsu" method of deception, Kelly took full advantage of it.

The ship was approximately one hundred feet long. It was built somewhat along the lines of a submarine, though with a wider beam and a deeper hull. There was a central control room located in the observation "blister" where ordinarily a conning tower might have been located. He saw the stars, but he did not like them. As he had imagined, they were eye-piercing, unshimmering pinpoints of light, in some places so numerous that they seemed to coalesce into lakes of nebulous fire. Between these star fields and all the individual stars was a blackness that tortured instinct—the instinct of the earthbound human animal. Agoraphobia—fear of the open spaces, an especial fear of spaces where the normal pull of Mother Earth was lessening with each minute. He turned away from the stars and sought the Earth. It swung imperceptibly through the great emptiness, three million miles astern, a glowing green ball accompanied by a small, yellow moon. The cradle of terrestrial humanity, anchor of normal, reasoning life, receding apathetically into the immeasurable abyss.

Kelly fought nausea and instinctive fear by turning his attention again to the ship.

In the great belly of it he found what he sought—the *modus operandi.* Ponderous rotors, weighing far more than the rest of the ship and its contents combined, were driven by electric motors. These, in turn, were powered by D. C. generators which were turned by an ingenious closed system steam turbine fed by a solar boiler.

The rotors were unique. They were

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split in uneven segments at an odd angle in such a way that one part was much larger than the other. The smaller segment of each was wound as an electromagnet of great power. While the larger segment swung downward in its course, or Earthward, the electromagnetic segment tended to hold the two together as a balanced whole. But as the larger segment swung upward, some sort of commutator action interrupted current flow in the magnets and the large segment tended to fly upward, owing to centrifugal force. But at the proper moment the lower segment became an electromagnet again, trying to draw it back. What happened, instead, was that the combined mass and momentum of the half dozen gigantic rotor segments was superior to the mass of the ship and the pull of gravity, and the ship moved more than the flying segments, thus effecting an upward motion of the whole! In fact, the free segments never quite touched the electromagnetic sections in full speed operation, and the effect was a binary solar system. The heavier the system, the more independent of Earth it became. Planetary rotors! Nature had its own answer to overcoming gravity and here was an imitation of it!

Kelly bowed, mentally, to the genius of Harold Garner. Once the ship had floated out into space far enough, rocket drivers were utilized to build up speed. They had long since been extinguished, *Ivya* explained, as they had acquired a velocity of some forty-eight thousand miles per hour.

"We could turn the engines off, too," she said, calling the rotors engines for lack of sufficient vocabulary, "but you would get sick."

He knew what she meant. The slight acceleration maintained by the action of the rotors provided a light artificial gravity. Otherwise, they would go floating around in free fall.

The question of fuel and oxygen was also answered. Garner had left, in his log, simple outlines of how various types of self-igniting fuel might be manufactured chemically on Mars, or by electrolysis, in some cases. There were choices like liquid oxygen and thiokol rubber, liquid hydrogen and oxygen, or even nitric acid and hydrazin! Garner's notes did not mention hydrazin as such. He merely referred to it as "a stable alkaline gas derived from diazo-acetic acid." *Ivya* explained that the priests of Mars were not without their science and had been able to make what was necessary, even including a unique kind of chemical generation of oxygen inside the old tanks without benefit of compressors. Garner, evidently, had shown them plenty before they had decided to take him captive.

But he gathered one salient fact—the Martians knew nothing about electricity.

When he pinned *Ivya* down on the subject of Flame Crystals he learned more than he had hoped for. These crystals were the last of radioactive substances on Mars, but evidently they did not contain isotopes belonging to the Uranium series, because Radium D could not be made from them. Almost the entire supply of

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Flame Crystals was held in one treasure heap, guarded over like some treasure of the Nibelungs by *Sunn-lal*, herself, in the Country of the Other Life. This place, he learned, was deep underground in the caverns of Mars. Kelly gathered that Mars was riddled with great, subterranean systems of caverns both natural and man made.

His mind gravitated toward that treasure heap of Flame Crystals. With that in his possession and this space ship—But such thoughts he was determined to conceal from *Sunn-lal*, if possible. Evidently *Ivya* was controlled by some sort of projection of *Sunn-lal*, and true entity of her existed somewhere under the surface of Mars. Perhaps face to face with her he would find her overwhelming, but at this distance her projected power might be something he could hope to cope with.

Finally, he turned to the subject of Fitzgerald and Maljarn, and also his weapons. Where were they?

She told him that Fitzgerald had the tommygun and some of the grenades. She had "controlled" him and made him tell her about Maljarn and his package of Radium D. They had traced Maljarn to the other space ship and there attempted to capture him. But he had a hand grenade, himself, taken from the helicopter, and had threatened to blow himself up along with the grillinn if she attempted to "control" him also.

Yet he wanted passage back to Mars, and the other ship was not yet quite complete. Nor did he know how to operate it. So there had been a sort of compromise. Maljarn would go to Mars as a prisoner. After they arrived he would have to take his chances. He had insisted on taking Fitzgerald along—though why she did not know.

Kelly recalled a portion of previous conversation with Fitzgerald: "Maljarn really came here in search of a certain key that will, he says, unlock the ancient scientific secrets of his race, and once he and his kind get back on their feet, scientifically speaking, he feels they can knock Soon Lall for a loop. Funny part is, he thinks *I* have the key!"

"What will you do with them when you get to Mars?" Kelly asked.

She shrugged and smiled, childishly. "The priests always attend to such details. We must get the grillinn from Maljarn. After that, it does not matter what happens to them."

Actually, Kelly was not much concerned with the other two, himself, but he had decided to take a hand in this interplanetary game, so all cards had to be played for the highest possible benefit to himself. For one thing, he needed his weapons—and maybe he could use Fitzgerald and Maljarn to good advantage. This seemed to require a policy of playing ball on *both* teams.

"Did you know that Fitzgerald is very much in love with you?" he asked. "He told me he'd give his life for you."

Ivya wrinkled up her nose. "He's so funny looking and awkward!" she exclaimed. "And besides—" She

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moved over to him and caressed his arm. "I love *you.*"

He drew away, slightly. "I—ah—How about my talking to your prisoners?"

Ivya's blue eyes filled with alarm. "They would kill you!" she exclaimed.

"Not necessarily. Look. I'm on your side because I think you're going to let me share your power—"

"Oh *yes!*" she exclaimed. But as she clutched his arm again the innocence had gone from her eyes and her caress. "I'll make you the ruler of Mars—even of Earth!"

Again, he moved gently but firmly away. "I have a proposition to make them," he said. "They might listen, and if they do they'll fall into a trap—and you'll get your Rad—ah—grillinn.

An inhuman lust was shining from the girl's eyes now, and subjectively he seemed to be aware of the shadow that dwelled within her. She approached him again, saying, "You *can* benefit by working with me! I'll give you everything—even immortality! Only love me! Love me!"

Before he could prevent it, she was close pressed in his arms, embracing him tightly, her soft, barely clothed body a searing heat to him, her soft lips on his as she held his head down to her mouth, using a hundred different tricks of love that he had known before—but never had he known them to be used with such age-wise experience.

Aroused in spite of himself, he identity—no Kiefer treatment. If I give her what she wants I'll have a grip on her.

So it was that Kelly began to respond to the hungering love of *Sunnlal,* forgetting that between him and that ancient, Ultimate Female was a beautiful, innocent child—a child whom one man, alone, fully understood and really loved. . . .

IT WAS in this intimate moment that Fitzgerald came into the control room where they stood, very compromisingly locked in each other's arms. In his trembling, white-knuckled hands was Kelly's loaded tommygun.

They drew apart abruptly and stared at him, fascinated. His homely face was a stark study in mixed emotions—murderous hate for Kelly, and an adolescent sort of tragic reproach for *Ivya.* There was a puppy-love droop to his wide mouth when his eyes turned pleadingly toward *Ivya.* And then the hate flared back when he turned to Kelly.

"What th' hell you think you're doing, Kelly?" he half-shouted, his lips colorless with rage. "I've told you her story! *You* know you're taking advantage of a helpless child! And I told you I love her!" He took a step toward Kelly, aiming the tommygun carefully. "Do you know what my guts feel like right now, after seeing her with you like that? Just like *yours* are going to feel in less than three seconds, as soon as I pull this trigger, Kelly! You're going to die!"

"No—!" screamed *Ivya,* her voice

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strangely deepening to an authoritative, menacing tone. "You will not kill him!" The coldness of death was in the girl's eyes as she started toward Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald spoke through his teeth at her. "You keep out of this, you—you hell's witch!—and leave Yvonne Mayban alone! Try to change me and I'll kill your lover boy!" He was panting now, a look of utter desperation in his eyes. "So help me God, I'm going to control you, Soon Lall! I took the grillinn from Maljarn, and you're not going to have it! Do you know why? Because I'm going to drop it into deep space! And don't think you'll ever get back to Earth for more! When we get to Mars, this ship's going to go up in smoke! As for Mayban's ship, don't count on that either! Maljarn started a fire there before you got hold of him. Know where that fire was? In the fuel tank storage cave right next to the ship, itself! By now the whole thing's blown to hell! The bridge of space is done! We'll stay on Mars—but you are going to die, Soon Lall! I'm going to take Yvonne Mayban out of your clutches!"

The shadow was upon *Ivya* now and the room seemed to fill with the powerful aura of a terrible presence. Fitzgerald, in spite of his emotions, was half filled with fear and awe, watching her slow approach. His gun was aimed at her, but because she walked in the body of Yvonne he could not pull the trigger.

As a dull look crept into his eyes and his hands began to relax on the gun, *Ivya* asked him, in low, hypnotic tones, "How did you escape from your prison? And where is Maljarn?"

"Maljarn," said Fitzgerald, stupidly, "finally slept. I—picked the lock, got out, and locked him in."

"And the grillinn? Where is that?"

"I have it. I have his hand grenade, too."

The thought of the grenade came as a sudden inspiration to Fitzgerald. The dull glaze on his eyes cleared, and he reached swiftly into his pocket. But that was as far as he got, because Kelly made a flying tackle and brought him to the steel floor with such force that it knocked him senseless for one brief moment. The tommygun clattered from nerveless fingers and Kelly's foot kicked it far out of reach.

"Get the grillinn!" exclaimed *Ivya*. "And the grenade!"

Kelly frisked his victim and pulled out the hand grenade. This he handed to the girl. In another moment he found the Radium D, contained in a heavy little lead case. This, too, he handed to *Ivya*, and her eyes lighted in triumph.

"Now, Earthman," she said, "you shall know what power is—when we get to Mars! And you shall share it with me—lover!"

She started to lay a possessive hand on his head as he bent over Fitzgerald, but in that moment Fitzgerald recovered.

He kneed Kelly in the groin, but the latter swung at him, the blow powered by his explosive reaction to

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the pain—and he cursed. Fitzgerald was lean and wiry. He shook off the effects of the blow and twisted out of Kelly's weakened grip.

When Kelly got to his feet, groaning in agony, he found that Fitzgerald had left the control room. *Ivya* had just picked up the tommygun, which she handed to him.

"Take this!" she exclaimed. "Find him—and kill him!"

Kelly looked at her, giving her his old, slow appraisal, gradually recovering from his pain. Why not?—he thought. The man would be a menace to him, loose like this in the ship, hating him, waiting to come back at him and kill him. It was self-defense. Earth lay behind—far behind. This was deep space, and they were headed for an alien planet. He could make his own laws, establish any set of moral principles he pleased. A strange wave of lusty, primitive elation swept through him, giving him strength. This was the beginning of his power! —the power to make and break, to build or destroy! To command! To rule!

Just as he turned to track down and kill Fitzgerald, a meteor struck the ship. . . .

KELLY was thrown to the floor, as was *Ivya*. Her head collided violently with a metal upright supporting an instrument panel and she lay under the panel as though dead.

Kelly got to his feet, torn between a curiosity as to her condition and concern for the safety of the ship. He heard air screaming into space somewhere—then safety hatches clanged shut, followed by an ominous silence.

He thought of Fitzgerald and took a new grip on his tommygun. *Ivya* could wait.

Without stealth or caution, he started through the ship, running swiftly, ready to shoot at anything that moved. But he did not get far before he found his path obstructed by steel safety hatches. He feared to open them, reasoning that a vacuum was on the other side.

Hastily, he conducted further explorations. The hatches had locked him and *Ivya* out of two-thirds of the ship including the rotor room where the solar boiler and generators and motors were. He could feel the vibration of the planetary rotors under his feet, so he knew they were still functioning—but he could not know if Fitzgerald or Maljarn still lived. Nor did it matter now. If they lived they could not interfere with him, being blocked off by the hatches.

What was far more important—he had the control room! If Mayban's ship had been destroyed, there was still this one! The bridge of space was not yet broken—not while he held the controls!

He went back to *Ivya*. He found her lying under the control panel as he had left her, her left temple caked with blood. There was a very bad gash in her head above the temple. He felt her pulse and found it weak. She lay there like a beautiful creation of the gods, her semi-transparent robe wildly awry. The sight of her perfect body gave him the impression that he

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was actually looking upon Eve, the first woman ever created, in ultimate, unadulterated perfection. Here were innocence, beauty, helplessness—all three elements that appealed to forgotten instincts within him.

He pulled the robe around her and carefully lifted her in his arms. The bunkroom was still available, and he took her there.

Which was the beginning of a long and lonely vigil. Days passed into weeks while Kelly fed and cared for *Ivya*. She would awaken at times and talk deliriously. But whenever he looked into her eyes he found no trace of the deadly shadow. It was as though some subtle balance had been changed in the girl, making her an unfit medium for the power of *Sunnlal*. *Ivya* had become Yvonne—a sweet child with the virgin body of a beautiful woman. And all the powers of Satan were gone from her. In brief moments of clear consciousness she would cling to his powerful hands and ask him who he was and where they were.

As she gained strength he was able to analyze her true personality and her personal knowledge and perspectives. She knew she was Yvonne Mayban—that Garner had kidnapped her and her brother, that her brother had died of a strange parasite sickness picked up from the Martian caves—or so the priests had informed her. She knew that she had been *Ivya*, the goddess—that the priests needed her. Her child's mind was still conditioned by their influence and she was loyal to their cause. She was aware of being deprived of her true powers and she was worried.

One time he came into her room to find her stark naked, chanting strange incantations. She was standing in the center of the bunk room, arms upstretched in desperate supplication. He caught his breath at the overwhelming perfection of her.

He picked up her robe off the bunk and made her put it on, but she threw it off again, resentful of his interference.

"Put it on!" he commanded. "No voodoo stuff, beautiful! Leave *Sunnlal* out of this! If I see that witch getting back into you I'll knock you out with this!" He shook his fist in her face.

Her blue eyes searched his in bewilderment. Then tears flooded them and she threw herself onto the bunk, sobbing. He covered her with the robe and left her.

As the disk of Mars emerged out of the abyss of space, he thought and planned. Certainly he had no intention of being stranded on Mars. One of his principal goals would be to repair the ship and obtain unquestioned possession of it. The best way to do that was to obtain the full cooperation of the priests, who had some knowledge of science. There would not be much difficulty in communicating with them, because he knew now they had learned English from both *Ivya* and Garner in order to read his log and other notes. To obtain their cooperation he would have to make a pretense of friendliness, give them their grillinn and offer

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his services in obtaining more. How convince them of his sincerity? Devotion to *Ivya.* That was it!

But if they knew she no longer had the "power," that *Sunn-lal* no longer possessed her, would they consider her to be valuable to them? Logic told him he would have to make them think she was still the old *Ivya*—until he had gained his own purposes. After he had acquired the Flame Crystals, as well as the ship, he would bow out.

And what of Yvonne? Women did not mix well with perfect crimes. Or did they? She was a child, and very pliable now. He could develop her into a criminal version of Pygmalion's type of handiwork. What a Mata Hari she would make!—traveling in the capitals of the world and planting his crystals where they would do the most good! Yes! He could use her!

Then—as she became more sophisticated. . . . He began to dream personal dreams concerning Yvonne. God knew she was the most beautiful creature he had ever seen in his life!

THE PROBLEM of deceleration arose. Mars dominated the firmament, not in size—as it was still five million miles ahead—but with its color and brightness and its two, jewel-like moons, tiny light points that moved almost with a visible velocity about the parent body. The planet glowed with soft pastel reds, greens and yellows, one of its polar caps brilliantly apparent. An unknown world at the other side of endlessness.

Insomnia began to assail Kelly as he looked forward to the marvelous experience that awaited him there. To walk on another sphere, on a far off island in the immeasurable ocean of space, to look at Earth and see it lost in the firmament like another star! Again, Kelly told himself, this was living!

However, the tiny dust-mote that was their ship hurtled toward its destination at well over fifty thousand miles per hour. At that velocity they had one hundred hours to decelerate—slightly over four Earth days. But the job had to be started.

Yvonne still remembered Garner's teachings. She knew the controls, and she knew her specific destination once they reached the planet. At first intermittently but with lengthening periods of activation, she applied deceleration to the ship by means of the rocket motors. Several times she controlled vanes in the stern engines of correct course, gently but expertly. On the third day their speed had been reduced to ten thousand miles per hour, but Mars had leaped at them, blotting out much of the firmament with what seemed to be belligerent intent. Definite lines were visible now on the Martian surface and when Kelly asked her if they were canals she seemed to come up with a memorized quotation from Garner.

"You see straight lines stretching from pole to pole," she said, "augmented by bands of vegetation that are green in the summer hemisphere and red in the winter hemisphere. Neither does Nature make straight

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lines with such convenient design nor does she make them cross at the equator where Martian surface dwellers would naturally build their cities in order to keep warm. *Naturally* they are canals! They were built by the ancient Martians and have fallen largely into disuse, but to assume that they are anything but canals would be a form of idiocy or insanity!"

Kelly wondered about Garner, the twin brother of Mayban who had started all this. Was he still alive? Yvonne did not know.

They discussed Fitzgerald and Maljarn often, but always concluded that they had died when the meteor struck the ship.

In the beginning of the fifth day the task of deceleration was complete. Suspended solely by the planetary rotors now, they hovered above a broad, Martian landscape just beyond the atmosphere, drifting slowly toward Yvonne's destination. An inverted periscope gave them a wide-angled view through the bottom of the ship as they gradually lost altitude.

Kelly was at the periscope when a totally unexpected development presented itself.

His pulse raced abruptly when he saw the space-suited figure fall away from the ship, hurtling downward toward the Martian atmosphere. On its back was a parachute. Even as he watched, the chute began to open as the air was reached. Gradually it mushroomed out, and he knew that it would be possible for its daring user to make a landing under this condition of lighter gravity and live!

Fitzgerald! He had located the suit and the parachute and gotten out through the airlock! With him, inside the suit, he might ever be carrying Maljarn!

But to the devil with Maljarn! It was Fitzgerald that infuriated him now! Fitzgerald's entire life energies on Mars would be dedicated to searching him out and rescuing Yvonne.

Evidently Fitzgerald had chosen to bail out like this in order to avoid capture at the hands of the priests. Or *was* that the reason? Kelly stiffened suddenly, remembering Fitzgerald's declaration: "When we get to Mars, this ship's going to go up in smoke!"

There was the stark *probability* that Fitzgerald or Maljarn or both had booby-trapped the ship and that they had made a desperate jump for it *because it was ready to blow up!*

"Is something wrong?" asked Yvonne.

Kelly jumped for the controls, with which he had become thoroughly familiar by now. He cut the rotors off and the ponderous ship began to fall like a meteor, though it maintained an even keel because of its gyroscopes.

"What are you doing!" screamed Yvonne. "Have you gone crazy? We'll be killed!"

"We'll be killed if we don't get off this boat immediately!" he retorted. "Hold tight! No time for explanations!"

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Gambling blindly with timing, peed and distance, he let the ship lunge swiftly downward as long as e dared. At an altitude of five thou-and feet he reactivated the rotors, iving them full speed. He could feel ne pressure of deceleration against ne soles of his feet, but Mars still ame at them with sickening speed. Dimly he was aware of Yvonne's creams, of her hands trying to get at ne controls.

When they were within a thousand eet of the reddish ground he saw hat their rate of fall was not entirely uicidal and he began to hope. At ve hundred feet they were heading or the ground at about twenty miles er hour. At fifty feet, less speed. t twenty-five feet, ten miles per our.

They landed with a roaring jar hat threw them to the floor, followed y a heart-rending shriek of tearing ears and machinery and subsequent arthquakes caused by flying rotor egments weighing tons. As the lights ent out, Kelly knew the ship was all ut ruined by the crash.

"Come on!" he said, feeling in his ocket for the package of Radium D nd picking up his tommygun and he grenade belt. "Let's get out of ere if we can!" He took her hand nd pulled her toward the hatches.

Now that air had entered the ship rom the outside, the hatches had re-eased their locks and the two space-ravelers got through to the main irlock. Without pause or ceremony, Kelly dashed out, ignoring the land-ng ladder. He pushed Yvonne out and she fell ten feet, landing unharmed in the deep, cloying dust of the Martian desert. Kelly jumped, landed lightly, and pulled her up. He made her run as fast as they could through the deep, soft sand. And his lungs were suddenly burning as they strained to absorb sufficient oxygen from the thin air. In an instant he had the worst case of altitude *saroche* in his life. His head felt ready to split and he could hear and feel his heart beating wildly.

It was then that the space ship blew up. The blast smote their ears, then their bodies, and they fell, shuddering, into the sand. As Kelly felt himself sailing off into a pain-shot, swirling vertigo, he heard Fitzgerald shouting: "The bridge of space is done! We'll stay on Mars!"

"No!" he yelled, in delirium, gasping feverishly for air. "*Won't* stay here!" He gasped and sweated coldly, struggling to lift his head and glare at Yvonne. "Got to—find—Garner! . . . 'F's alive . . . 'll get'm . . . build . . . ship!"

Then Kelly passed out cold, and Yvonne turned his head sideways so that he'd breathe something more than sand . . .

THERE FOLLOWED an extended period of Kelly's existence that he could only recall as one remembers a series of semi-connected dreams. It might have been days, months, or even years. How was he to tell, on Mars, where time is different and calendars—as far as he could determine—were unknown?

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In the early stages of that experience he had been aware of thirst, starvation and near asphyxiation in a desert, of being led stumbling through long, chilling nights and sandstorms by Yvonne, who was sufficiently acclimated to the planet to survive more easily than he. Then there had been plains overgrown with a sickly, yellow, fungus-like plant, where deadly, multi-legged reptiles and swarming seas of devouring insects plagued them and kept them on the run. And the red swamps—a Martian Matto Grosso—where existence was terror. There were long nights beneath the racing moons where double shadows and swamp-water reflections and mysterious flora combined into a slow motion fantasia of conjured spirits, and the vast, dead past seemed to rise from the breast of the prostrate planet and taunt him with a thousand alien forms and voices and sounds. He remembered being in Yvonne's arms, shivering and whimpering like a lost, sick child. And sometimes he knew she slept in his own arms—naked as Eve—for the robe had long since fallen apart and been discarded. But he was out of his mind most of the time with a strength consuming fever and was hardly aware of the real purpose of their struggles, of the strange food she found for him, of the half-buried ruins of ancient cities they wandered through.

In the secondary stages he was aware of many men—little, brown men who spoke sometimes in Martian, sometimes in broken English, and bore him and Yvonne afar on ornate palanquins.

There was a valley . . .

He remembered the valley well, for when he finally recovered it was still there. Not a dream, but a reality. He sat up on a low couch and looked between the pillared arcades of a sort of ancient, half-restored Parthenon made of iridescent glass, or so it seemed. Low, verdure-clad hills a mile away formed a restful horizon. On the hillsides and in the valley were many ancient, beautiful ruins of a lost race, some of them almost wholly restored. At the bottom of the valley was a placid lake bordered by reeds and brilliant flowers, like flamboyant lilies, that grew in the water or floated on it.

This, he learned, was Kordyan Da'al, home of the priests, site of the Temple of *Ivya,* and entranceway to the subterranean catycombs that led to Korung-lal, the Country of the Other Life—dwelling place of *Sunn-lal.*

On that day Yvonne came to him with a tender smile and a special preparation of strength-restoring food. She was clothed like the goddess that *Ivya* was supposed to be, in glass-spun harness the color of gold. Only an open net of tiny jewels supported her perfect breasts. From a line low on her torso a flowing, split-skirt of crystal-like cloth fell to her sandal tops. Her hair was a coppery halo of loveliness surrounding her innocent face.

"I think you saved my life," he told her, as he examined the food.

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"It was repayment for saving mine," she answered.

That reminded him painfully that the space ship had been blown up and that perhaps both Fitzgerald and Maljarn were at large somewhere, bent on catching up with him. "Have you found Garner?" he asked.

Her brow furrowed in puzzlement. "No one has ever found a trace of Garner since he escaped from the priests once many years past," she told him. "He probably died somewhere."

A wave of loneliness and fear engulfed Kelly. Stranded on Mars with no means of returning to Earth! He suddenly remembered Earthly cities he had known—neon lights, night-clubs, theatres, ten thousand streamlined automobiles racing along the sweeping curves of the Hollywood Freeway. His family home in Beverly Hills. A supermarket. A drugstore with its magazine stands and candy counters and soda fountains. Ham and eggs. Coffee. *Life* magazine. Newport Beach. A day at Catalina Island.

Where were those things now? Buried fifty million miles deep in space—or in the irretrievable past of incarnation.

Kelly sweated and stopped eating. He grasped Yvonne's arm. "We've got to find Garner!" he exclaimed.

THAT WAS how life began for Kelly in Kordyan Da'al after his period of physiological adjustment to the thinner atmosphere of Mars. He was a tiger pacing his cage. Frustrated, desperate, helpless—even his goal, the Flame Crystals, useless to him now. He had only one hope. Mayban's ship might not have been destroyed. Mayban might yet put in an appearance. If the ship had been destroyed, actually, Mayban might even undertake to build another one—although that would take years, and it was also improbable.

He was forced to pin his hopes on Mayban's ship. He had to operate on the assumption that Mayban would arrive. Otherwise, there was only the proposal of the priests to consider, which he regarded as insanity.

They claimed that *Ivya* would regain her powers from Sunn-lal if Kelly married her and became High Priest of the ancient mystery. Once she had regained her power, he and she could rule Mars, under the "just guidance" of the old priesthood. It was the plan of the priests to conquer the Nalyan race, which comprised Maljarn's people. Maljarn, he gathered, was the ruler of the Lilliputian Nalyan refugees from the shattered fifth planet. It was rumored that the Nalyans were engaged in feverish preparations for an attack on Kordyan Da'al, that they had finally found the key to their ancient science and were confident of victory. Ordinarily, this might have been a source of concern to the priests, who numbered only a few thousand men, women and children, inasmuch as the smaller Nalyans could be numbered by the tens of thousands. However, the arrival of a new supply of Radium D on the planet had given them new strength.

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The priests had a weapon called *lat sunn nur*. It was the same weapon that Maljarn had exhibited in Mayban's study that night in Santiago de Roboré, and which, Kelly learned, Maljarn had previously stolen from *Ivya*. It consisted of a combination of resistor, resonance and amplifying crystals at its base, combined with a vibrator column that gave off various types of ultra-sonic frequencies. Some of these vibrated the air in such a way as to make it glow with a golden light. The *lat sunn nur*, nicknamed *Sunn* by the priests and "*Sunn*-beam" by Kelly, would not function without a minute charge of Radium D, the radiation frequencies of which it amplified and heterodyned. Actually the antenna of the "*Sunn*-beam" was an ultra-sonic, multi-frequency tuning fork. But it could paralyze, hypnotize, or kill, depending upon the setting of the heterodyning resonator crystals at its base.

This single weapon had been the source of priestly power in the old days before radioactive isotopes of Uranium disappeared from the planet. Thus, Radium D had restored them, as had certain secret frequencies of the "*Sunn*-beam" reawakened the dreaded, mystic power of Sunn-lal.

Kelly had long conversations with the highest ranking priest, in whose "palace" he had been convalescing. This priest, known as Yawar, was about four feet tall, somewhat stoop-shouldered, and possessed of an amazingly narrow, hatchet-like face. Although the smooth texture of his brownish skin did not show it, his age was close to a hundred Martian years. It was this Yawar who had engineered the entire renaissance of priestly power through the discovery and application of radioactive substances on Garner's ship. It was this man who filled in most of the remaining details of the mystery that Kelly had been trying to unravel ever since he had come across his first Flame Crystal, back in Chicago.

Fitzgerald had told him of two Martian races, which had been second-hand information gathered from Maljarn at a time when Maljarn had not been able to express himself adequately. There were the Nalyans, Maljarn's people, and there were the priests. However, the latter were the self-styled "cream of the crop" of the indigenous race of Mars. Thousands of years before, there had existed tens of thousands of true Martians, in the old days when the power of Sunn-lal was supreme. But a long series of seasons of drouth, cold and pestilence had come over the land and the resilience of the race had begun to fade. They had little will to live, and so they had given themselves up to Sunn-lal and gone to Korung-lal, the Country of the Other Life.

Kelly pinned Yawar down on that particular and learned that this indefinable power that was Sunn-lal purportedly "absorbed" the spiritual entities of the victims into one gigantic whole and left the victims' physical counterparts to wander in blind, animal existence deep in the cavern

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world. These troglodytes, called *Korlungs,* numbered still almost ten thousand. They were blind, living and breeding in darkness. Their children, in turn, were "bled" by Sunn-lal and left with a mere physical shell.

"Actually," said Yawar, "this is not as horrible a situation as you will tend to surmise. You see, in the Korlung we have the equivalent of a physical nucleus, as it were, for a whole new race. I think that eventual commerce and traffic with the peoples of your own world will serve as the stimulant Mars requires for a rebirth of the race. When that time comes, Sunn-lal will cease to exist, and her infinite spirit will return its components to the Korlung. Again, they will walk as men, but being helpless they will turn to us, the priests, for guidance—and we shall rule them."

"You intimate," said Kelly, "that Sunn-lal can be controlled, or destroyed."

Yawar's narrow eyes suddenly gleamed. "That is my secret alone! When the time comes—"

"Then why tell *me* about it?" he interrupted.

"Because—I need more Radium D, as you call it. I need your services as an Earthman. You are ambitious. I realize your cooperation must be purchased. Therefore, I am offering you a share in the future, a share in the power of the priests!"

Over a few thousand blind troglodytes on a burned out world! You can keep it!

"There is one thing I would consider as valuable," said Kelly, "but there is no use considering it if I can't return to Earth."

"But that is what I am getting at!" persisted Yawar. "You *must* return to Earth!"

"Got any ideas how that might be done?"

"The Nalyans once possessed a great science," said Yawar, "including the science of space travel. It is known to me that Maljarn has rediscovered the key to the lost knowledge of his people. I believe he will try to attack us in a space ship of his own making. When he does, our *Sunn* weapons will hypnotize or destroy him, and you shall have your space ship. If it is too small, we will copy its principle of operation and build you a larger one, with your assistance."

Kelly, for the first time since his recovery, suddenly took a new interest in life. He sat up on his couch and stared at Yawar.

"If that is a distinct possibility," he said, "then you can count on me—*if* you can give me what I want."

"And what is that?"

"Flame Crystals. All you can get me."

A dark, resentful expression came to Llyawar's thin face. "You ask for the treasury and the arsenal," he accused. "Why?"

"Plans of my own, pop," retorted Kelly, and his dark eyes met those of the priest with their old, silent laughter.

"But perhaps your plans are *mine,*" said Yawar, returning his intent gaze.

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Was the old man psychic? Kelly almost gaped at his. "You mean—"

"Yes," said Yawar, deliberately probing him with his eyes. "Power over your Earth; Do you think we priests would resuscitate our race without a greater goal than mere existence on a worn out world?"

Kelly remained silent. He had to do some thinking on his own. No use getting in an argument with the influential priest now. It was the wrong time to make enemies.

"Let's talk it over later," he countered, finally. "In the meantime, tell me about *Ivya*. Why did you ever make her a goddess?"

Yawar told him. The boy and the girl that Garner brought to Mars on his first trip were captured and sent to Korung-lal. However, whereas the boy became a Korlung, the girl, Yvonne, was chosen by Sunn-lal to be her physical medium. The power of Sunn-lal walked in the body of the girl, and through her the priests were able to influence even half of the Nalyans, in spite of their leanings toward Garner's teachings of Christianity. *Ivya,* in other words, was a counter weapon against Garner's influence. In fact, there was a colony of Nalyans living in Kordyan Da'al who were devoted to *Ivya,* and through them the priests had been able to split the loyalty of the race, to foment revolution against Maljarn.

"Then this Garner actually did preach Christianity?"

"I think," said the priest, "he started to, but his mind became twisted and it is said that he, himself, sought to take the place of the God for whom he preached. There was a name he called himself when he was our prisoner. He withstood all manner of suffering and abuse, all because of the strength that strange name used to give him, after he came to believe he was actually what he called himself."

"Well? What was that name?"

"I believe it was—yes, that was it. The New Messiah."

Kelly snorted. "Sounds like a refugee from Pershing Square."

At that moment, Yawar was called away, and Kelly relaxed on his couch, looking across the Valley of Kordyan Da'al toward the gleaming Temple of *Ivya.*

So Sunn-lal could be destroyed—she who guarded the Flame Crystals. And Maljarn was working on space ships, no doubt with the willing assistance of Fitzgerald.

Very interesting. . . .

A DAY CAME when rumors changed to the certainty that the Nalyans were marching on Kordyan Da'al. Thousands of their number had actually been sighted crossing the swamps to the East and skirting the famous Dornalian Pit, which was a mile wide hole in the ground that dropped away into dank darkness and —it was said—gave entrance to the dreaded underworld of Korung-lal. Some of the priest scouts reported that the enemy carried strange weapons that made thunder and shot leaden pellets that could pierce both armor, flesh and bone.

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Kelly had long since shown his tommygun to Yawar and some of the other priests, suggesting that they build at least single shot weapons on the same principle, but they had laughed at its crudeness and pinned their faith on the effectiveness of the "*Sunn*-beams." At any rate, they were aware of the nature of the enemy's weapon and they were not alarmed.

The only grave consideration facing them was the possibility of Maljarn's trying to surprise them with some product of his ancient science, such as a space ship. In preparation for this contingency they posted guards with *Sunn* projectors at all strategic approaches to the valley. Night was approaching, but Deimos and Phobos were rising in full phase.

"Personally," said Kelly to both Yawar and Yvonne, "I can't get excited about this war—except for the space ship possibility. What is the main issue, after all? On Earth we'd refer to this as a game of 'Cowboys and Indians.'"

Yawar had a definite answer. "They seek to destroy the power of Sunn-lal," he said. "Sunn-lal is an actuality — a supernatural power. They fear her existence. They also are out to reunite the Nalyan colony here with their own race."

"Somewhere I've heard such policies before," Kelly mused. Then he shrugged. "It's your affair. I'll stay neutral."

Yvonne took offense at that. "But Bob," she said, having learned to use his first name, "you, yourself, criticize the twisted concepts of Garner, which now are being carried out by Maljarn. Maljarn, himself, would be the New Messiah. You don't want that, do you?"

Kelly suddenly saw himself as a lonely adult marooned in a land of primitive children — tragi-comical puppets who "figure in lively paint, our attitudes queer and quaint." Instead of sympathy he felt only disgust and impatience, achieving balance only by adhering in his mind to the evaluations which fitted into his own world.

"Besides," Yvonne pouted, moving nearer to him and touching his arm, "I thought—"

He looked down at her and found her searching blue eyes to be more eloquent than words. He thought: Honey, you don't love a child that *way!* Maybe sometime when you grow up—

"It is time," said Yawar to Yvonne, "for you to appear in the Temple, to encourage the faithful and attempt, once more, to invoke the power of Sunn-lal." The top priest, it seemed, had not revealed to the masses that Yvonne was no longer *Ivya*. Yawar turned to Kelly. "The people are confident that the power of Sunn-lal will be with them and help repulse the enemy. It would be highly beneficial to us if this could actually be. Come!" he said to Yvonne. "We must leave at once!"

"Screwballs!" Kelly muttered to himself. But he went to get his tommygun. Somewhere in all this foolishness, Fitzgerald was probably work-

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ing with a grim purpose of his own. And the principles involved *there* Kelly could appreciate and understand. Fitzgerald was out to get him, and Kelly, on the other hand, did not relish the idea of having any other Earthman share with him the potentialities of Mars. So logic seemed to point to the fact that both men were out to get each other.

If Yvonne should become *Ivya* again, now, that might prove advantageous. The old Infinite Hag, Sunn-lal, might just give him those Flame Crystals if he went over to her side. Especially if he proved his loyalty by telling her about Yawar's intentions of destroying her once she had served his purpose.

A sudden idea struck Kelly, and he stopped in his tracks.

If Sunn-lal would not come to Yvonne, perhaps he could take Yvonne to Sunn-lal!—down under, in the Country of the Other Life! That's where the Flame Crystals were, anyway!

He thought of the dim caverns there, peopled by a pale, blind race of soulless troglodytes who were slaves to the Living Flame that was this inexplicable manifestation of some ancient, supernatural power. Then he shrugged off instinctive fears and laughed. "Gnomes and witches! Hell! Who's afraid of a bedtime story!"

But he remembered his previous contact with the terrible presence of Sunn-lal. In spite of himself—he remembered. . . .

NOR WOULD he ever forget Yvonne in the Temple, posing as her former self, *Ivya*, endeavoring to invoke the power of Sunn-lal. He went there because he could not resist the sight of her.

She stood on an ornate dais, stark naked and incredibly beautiful, chanting her incantations in harmony with the chanting masses of worshippers in the Temple, among whom he noticed several hundred replicas of Maljarn—the colony of Nalyans he had been told about. Instead of raising her arms in supplication, Yvonne opened them downward, toward the ground, as though praying to Hell. In her left hand, glowing with a golden light, was a "*Sunn*-beam." It was the first time he had seen her use it at the ceremonies, and when he saw and *felt* its effect, he began to back out of the Temple. She was using it to reduce her subjects to a state of hypnosis!

He stumbled out of the place, cursing and trying to shake his head free of the tingling, numbing effects of the ultra-sonic emanations.

"Ye gods!" he muttered, disgustedly. "What a way to produce fanatics!"

He strated up a path toward a hilltop guardpost he knew about. It was night, and as yet neither moon had risen high enough to shed light on the floor of the valley.

Suddenly, somebody clubbed him from behind, and he fell to the ground. He knew he had been struck deliberately with just sufficient force to incapacitate him momentarily, be-

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cause he did not lose consciousness. He was vaguely aware of a searing pain behind his ear where he had been struck. Someone rolled him over, and when he could see clearly he made out the silhouette of a tall man sitting on top of him, aiming his own tommygun at his face. The stars outlined a long neck and a large pair of ears.

"Fitzgerald!" he blurted out. "What the hell!"

"Shut up!" whispered the other, hoarsely. "Now listen to me! Don't move or I'll blow your head off! I'll tell you why I'm here—ahead of Maljarn's army."

Kelly said nothing. In fact, he relaxed. He could use some information. In the meantime he was gathering his strength and permitting his adversary to enjoy a false sense of security.

"I worked months with Maljarn before I figured he was out for his own good and nobody else's," Fitzgerald told him, swiftly. "The key to his ancient science was alternating current electricity and screen grid amplifiers. I gave it to him because he promised to invade this place and help me rescue *Ivya*. But when he got his space ship together he told me his main purpose was to kill her."

"Then he *did* build a space ship!" exclaimed Kelly, elated. This was practical conversation he could appreciate. Already he could see the neon lights on Broadway.

"Shut up! Yes. He has been mounting a new sort of ray weapon in it and he sent the army ahead of him, led by his top officers. I escaped some time ago and have come here to warn *Ivya*. I don't care whose side I'm on as long as I can protect her and get her out of the clutches of that damned Soon Lall!"

"I've got news for you, chum," Kelly told him. "When that meteor struck the space ship you booby-trapped so nicely for us, Sunn-lal was knocked out of Yvonne—and she's been herself ever since."

"Oh my God!" exclaimed Fitzgerald.

Kelly knocked the tommygun to one side and rolled in an opposite direction with Fitzgerald. He found himself struggling with a man who seemed to be made all of steel wires. Muscular strength against unlimited resilience and endurance. He fell into Judo, then, and soon landed a nerve-shattering blow that stretched the other out limp.

As he got to his feet with his tommygun he heard the sound of distant gunfire mingled with the shouts of priest guards. Then he saw the golden radiance of their big, stationary "*Sunn*-beams" flashing into action.

The battle was on. The Nalyan army had arrived within firing range of Kardyan Da'al. At his feet, Fitzgerald rolled over and groaned.

Kelly kicked him and said, "On your feet! I'll take you to Yvonne."

The other Earthman got up painfully. When he heard the distant gunfire and the shouting on the hilltops and looked up and saw the flashing auroras of the "*Sunn*-beams," he became excited. "Maljarn will be showing up any time now!" he exclaimed.

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"There's no way of telling him she's no longer *Ivya*. He'll kill her, anyway! We've got to protect her! Where is she?"

"In the Temple. On the double!" Fitzgerald hesitated, looking at the building out of which fighting groups of the priests and local Nalyans were moving in response to the war alarm.

"In the Temple! What's she doing in there if she's not—"

"Trying to invoke Sunn-lal again."

"Oh my God, no!—she must be stopped!"

"Why?" asked Kelly, provokingly. "Maybe it'd be a good idea. I was *getting* somewhere with *Ivya*. She and I—"

Fitzgerald hurled himself blindly at him, but he brought up the butt end of his weapon under his assailant's chin and he fell to the ground. Kelly kicked him.

"Get on your feet! Let's get going!"

Sullenly, Fitzgerald got up and obeyed orders. . . .

A CROWD of both priests and Nalyans congregated at the front of the Temple as Kelly brought in his captive—and Yawar came at once to find out what was going on. In the back part of the Temple Yvonne still stood naked on the dais, her "*Sunn*-beam" softly glowing. She appeared to be in a trance, as were several hundred worshippers kneeling before her.

Fitzgerald's wide mouth, slightly bloodied by Kelly's blow, grimaced in a weird expression of ecstasy and despair as he looked at her.

"This is the other Earthman I told you about," Kelly started to tell Yawar. "He says that Maljarn—"

"Yvonne!" cried Fitzgerald. "Yvonne!" He started running toward her, and Kelly lost no time in following him, to be trailed by Yawar and the others.

The strange, entranced expression in Yvonne's eyes faded. Her vision cleared, and she looked down at Fitzgerald, who stood among the kneeling priests and Nalyans, his hands unconsciously clasped together in a gesture of supplication.

"Don't change, Yvonne!" he cried. "Don't surrender again to the evil powers of Soon Lall—for the love of God!"

"God . . .?" she murmured. "You mean — the New Messiah — Garner? Who speaks of evil, Earthman? Sunn-lal will cleanse us all of evil!"

Kelly tapped Fitzgerald with his gun barrel and beckoned with his head. "Back out of it!" he said. "Yawar! Let's get her out of harm's way. Maljarn may attack us in a space ship."

"But where can we take her where she can be safe?" complained the priest.

Yawar became the recipient of the slow, Kelly appraisal. "You tell *me*," Kelly told him. "How about underground—into the caves?"

Yawar and the other priests behind him recoiled. "You mean," asked Yawar, "into Korung-lal?"

Kelly raised his brows, nonchalantly, a vague tenseness about his lips. "Why not?"

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"But it is a sacred place," protested Yawar, "not to be defiled by those who are not to become—"

"Baloney!" Kelly exclaimed, his eyes narrowing suddenly. "Stow that for the suckers! Now let's get going! Where's the hidden entrance?"

Yawar drew what there was of himself up straight, thin eyes glaring, while Kelly's finger tightened impatiently on the trigger of his tommy-gun.

"Look out!" yelled Fitzgerald, pointing at something behind Kelly.

"That's an oldey," commented the other, drily, without taking his eyes from Yawar. "Try something else."

But a great cry of alarm arose in the Temple, and Kelly, looking up from Yawar, saw Yvonne's eyes widen in fear and astonishment. She raised her "*Sunn*-beam" and pointed at an object above him.

He looked up in time to see a diminutive space ship moving directly at the naked girl on the dais. Inside he caught sight of Maljarn bending over his controls. And then a strange beam of light darted out at Yvonne. He realized suddenly that the ship was sound-proof, thus making it impervious to Yvonne's weapon.

In the same instant he felt Fitzgerald tug at his grenade belt.

"Come back here with that!" he shouted. "Look out, you fool!" Fitzgerald had already pulled the pin. He was running under the ship, simultaneously counting aloud as he held the live grenade in his hand.

It all happened in the space of three seconds. Maljarn's ray brought down Yvonne. She slumped and started to fall off the dais. The ship passed beyond the dais and was starting back for another sweep at Yvonne when Fitzgerald threw the grenade. It exploded against the small hull, shattering both the little ship and its pilot into fragments.

"You *idiot!*" yelled Kelly, aiming his gun at Fitzgerald. But in that moment the latter caught Yvonne in his arms as she fell from the dais.

"Quit hiding behind a woman and die like a man!" Kelly shouted, blind with rage and frustration. "You just destroyed our last ticket home!"

Fitzgerald tenderly surveyed the unconscious girl in his arms. Then he looked up at Kelly and said, quietly, "Shoot anyway, Kelly. Why don't you kill us both? What the hell's the matter with you? Look! I learned all about space ships when I was working with Maljarn—not the clumsy kind Garner invented, but real, bonafide stuff that nullifies gravity on an electro-magnetic principle. If you kill *me* you'll really tear up that ticket!"

Outside, they heard the reverberation of heavy explosions.

"Are those bombs or cannons?" Kelly asked Fitzgerald, remembering that the latter had given Earth knowledge to the Nalyans under Maljarn.

"Both," answered Fitzgerald. "They're getting closer. But the vital issue here is Yvonne. I don't know whether she's dead or alive. Somebody feel her pulse, quick!"

Both Kelly and Yawar took one

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of her limp wrists and searched for a pulse beat. Then Yawar pressed an ear against her breast and listened.

"Her heart does not beat," he said, straightening up. "But neither does she grow cold or rigid. It is some kind of suspended state of life."

"Quick!" cried Fitzgerald. "Think of something! She can't die—not now!" Tears of desperation were in his small, close-set eyes as he looked from one to another. Outside, the sounds of battle grew more intense. A cannon shot struck the Temple, and one wall crashed inward, killing half a score of priests.

"I have a suggestion," said Kelly, looking at Yawar. "And I'll back it up with this!" He pointed his tommy-gun at Yawar and the priests behind him began to back away.

A golden light appeared behind Kelly as his brain started to go numb. He spun, firing his weapon at the priest who was pointing the "*Sunn-beam*" at him. The latter fell on his face, stone dead.

"You get the idea now," he said to Yawar. "Let's get into your Holy of Holies. Let's find Sunn-lal, herself. Maybe she'll take care of her daughter."

"No!" shouted Fitzgerald.

Kelly raised his brows in mock surprise. "What else, then, Jerry? You know it's her only chance. No miracles here but what old Sunn-lal may be able to hand out. It's crazy, but—well, that's it!"

Fitzgerald's eyes narrowed with hate. "Then Yvonne can die!" he exclaimed. "Death would be better than to have her be obsessed again by—"

"There's one other point," interrupted Kelly. "Yawar, here, knows how to destroy Sunn-lal."

The other priests who had studied English looked at Yawar in amazement and translated this announcement for others around them, while he laughed at them all.

"Yes! I've always known that secret—but it is not time to destroy her."

"You mean," said Kelly, "as soon as *you* are in the saddle that will be time."

Fitzgerald watched both of them, trying to comprehend.

"Yawar, I think we understand each other," Kelly continued. "But just now I want you to understand this!" He prodded him with the tommygun. "Now let's get going!"

He turned to Fitzgerald with a mocking smile as Yawar began to lead the way in sullen silence toward the back of the Temple, followed by priests and hundreds of others. "Well, Jerry," he said, "are you with me?"

Fitzgerald's face was a grim mask as he held the girl in his arms and walked beside Kelly. "It's madness," he grumbled, "but what the hell am I going to do?"

"Okay. If you want to be spelled off carrying Yvonne, let me know."

Fitzgerald looked down at his goddess, then back at Kelly. He scowled, which was answer enough. And Kelly shrugged.

But the slight smile on his lips was false. Inside he was thinking: Sunn-

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lal, here comes lover boy!

He fought to suppress a shudder.

SEVERAL HOURS LATER, they were in the Country of the Other Life. A litter had been made for Yvonne, and several teams of priests took turns carrying her. All the while, she remained warm and limp, but with no perceptible pulse.

Torches illuminated towering walls and stalagmites, casting furtive, giant shadows about them. Here and there they stumbled through patches of fungus-like growths, the roots of which were tubular and supposed to be edible. Sometimes they traversed the shores of subterranean lakes or rivers. At other times they walked down through long tunnels carved out by the hand of man in ancient times.

Then they saw the Korlungs, the blind, soulless troglodytes whose spirits had been "borrowed" by Sunn-lal. They ran from the intruders at first, but later they followed, trailing them by ear and calling out meaninglessly, like the eternally damned. They were pale as ghosts, their eyes like scar-tissue, reminding Kelly of Kiefer.

One old naked hag, in particular, followed them with annoying persistence. Her whole complexion was like a glistening scar. She was hairless and wrinkled, and her long fingernails were black with dirt. Out of her mouth protruded two tusk-like fangs —the only teeth left in her head. Kelly thought he had a strong stomach, but when he looked at the old hag and heard her gurgling mouthings, he felt nauseated.

"All right, *Cleopatra,* get the hell out of our way!" he told her, but with no apparent effect.

"Cleopatra" seemed determined to join the party.

Finally, they came to a gigantic cavern that immediately attracted their attention to its center. For there, a quarter of a mile distant, was a tremendous stalactite which glowed with a dull light of its own. The stalactite, probably weighing a hundred tons, was suspended over a large hole in the floor of the cavern. Out of that hole emerged a swirling fog of light.

"There dwells Sunn-lal," said Yawar, in sepulchral tones.

The procession stopped.

But Kelly's mind refused to stop. Surrounding that hole he saw patches of eerie light, shimmering weirdly in the semi-darkness. He had seen that light before. It came from Flame Crystals. Down there were more Flame Crystals than he could ever use—a potential power over the leaders of Earth!

"Well, what are we waiting for?" asked Fitzgerald — but his voice trembled.

They moved on down the ancient trail onto the floor of the cavern.

Yawar was busy with personal plans of his own. So was Kelly. And so was Fitzgerald. The tension mounted between them as they drew near to the glowing hole in the floor. Kelly studied the giant stalactite above the hole. It carried within its structure some radioactive deposit that was evi-

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dently unadaptable to "*Sunn*-beam" use. As a tiny droplet of glowing moisture fell from its tip into the hole and came in contact with the luminous gas rising out of the pit, he saw the droplet flame up like a phosphorous flare, filling the whole cavern with light. The occurrence set him to wondering . . .

"What do we do?" he asked Yawar. "What happens now?"

Yawar regarded him sullenly. "If you really wish the girl to be obsessed by the Living Flame that is Sunn-lal, then you will follow my instructions."

"I'm asking you," said Kelly.

"Wait until we get there!" retorted Yawar.

In spite of their eerie feeling in this place, neither Kelly nor Fitzgerald could escape the taunt of their civilized instincts. In the midst of terror they felt silly enough to laugh at each other. Their minds could not fully accept the idea of a supernatural, occult power—like some Martian Isis—that would rise like an oracle from the pit and pass judgment upon their case. Yet Kelly remembered Sunn-lal in the form of *Ivya,* and remembering, he perspired coldly.

He tried to be practical. There, growing in luminous spangles and clusters all around the lip of the pit, were literally thousands of Flame Crystals. Hundreds lay loose on the ground, waiting only to be carried away. But how to take them from the cavern, single handed? How to get a space ship? In spite of the insanity of the idea, he had to admit that Sunn-lal was his only chance. If she could express herself through Yvonne again, she would protect him and perhaps cater to his whims—perhaps change this whole crowd into blind and groping Korlungs—like "Cleopatra" there, who gibbered and seemed to watch him with her sightless eyes, waiting to see what he would do.

The priests who carried Yvonne laid her on the ground very close to the edge of the glowing pit. Kelly stepped near, as did Fitzgerald, and looked downward into a seeming endlessness of glowing mists.

"It's better that she die," muttered Fitzgerald.

But Yawar and the other priests began a weird chanting and his voice was drowned out. Fitzgerald tensed as the pit began to glow more brightly. Kelly grew pale when he saw what he thought to be a giant shadow taking shape in the middle of those bright, swirling mists.

And Yawar watched both of the Earthmen. . . .

SUDDENLY, a great cry arose from the onlookers behind them, and they turned to see a tall, ruddy-faced man with blue eyes, who wore a black robe and walked resolutely toward the pit. In his large hands was a curious weapon that looked like a combination mortar and short bazooka.

"Garner!" shouted Fitzgerald.

Garner! — thought Kelly, looking intently at the man. *Garner, at long last!*

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The intruding Earthman raised one hand, demanding silence. As he spoke, his fanatic's voice seemed to thunder in the cavern. "I am the New Messiah!" he announced. "I am thy God and thy Law! And this evil spirit ye conjure out of Hell is the enemy to my Kingdom! This evil Thing shall be destroyed!" Whereupon he busied himself with the mortar weapon, and Fitzgerald took careful note of what he was aiming at.

A shadow seemed to descend upon Kelly's brain. He was inexplicably choked with emotions—a desperate longing for life, a colossal fear of death, uncontainable hatred and frustration, inexpressible love. His mind was assailed with kaleidoscopic visual impressions of a thousand landscapes and a thousand different eras of time—and then there was a beautiful, red-haired woman, like *Ivya,* running to him out of swirling shadows, her naked arms outstretched as though she had found him after endless striving and searching. And he heard the voice of Sunn-lal.

He prepares my death, Earthman! Save me and I will give you what you wish, if it be possible!—love, beauty, power, immortality! Be quick!

"How can I save you?" he asked under his breath, while he cursed himself for believing that he had heard her. "I want those Flame Crystals and I want a space ship. Where do I get a space ship?—Garner? Fitzgerald? Wait a minute! Can you save the girl?" His dark eyes gazed at the thickening shadow in the pit, fascinated, while he perspired profusely.

It requires no miracle to accomplish all you ask! The girl is in simple coma. Her heart can be stimulated. Be quick, then! Save me! Look, you, at the neck of this Messiah!

Kelly looked at Garner's neck—then froze. A fresh scar was there, in the exact spot where Maljarn had mauled Mayban in Santiago de Roboré. Mayban! No—Kelly remembered the skeleton in the jungle, the white man's skull crushed by a *macana*—and Kiefer's cryptic words: "The missionary is dead!" *Mayban* was dead!—he had been dead since long ago! Mayban, whose children were kidnapped by Garner. Garner had been masquerading as his twin brother, whom he had murdered in an attempt to silence his protests and put an end to his interference. He must have stowed away on his own ship years ago when *Ivya* made her first trip to Earth—fearing her power, hiding from her, yet determined to triumph over her in the end. Then if the man he had met in Bolivia was this same Garner who was before him now—

Stop him!—came Sunn-lal's frantic command.

The space ship!—thought Kelly. Garner saved his new ship out of the fire and came here—maybe brought it down here through the Dornalian Pit. It could be here now—somewhere in this cavern!

Quickly, Kelly sprang forward and placed a foot on Garner's back. He shoved with all his might, and Garner sprawled out into nothingness,

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screaming as he fell into the mists below. Simultaneously, Yvonne stirred, opening her eyes. Fitzgerald took her by the hand and pulled her out of harm's way. Then he knelt beside the mortar weapon and aimed it at the stalactite.

"No!" shouted Yawar. "You shall not destroy her!" He raised a "*Sunn*-beam" that someone surreptitiously handed him.

Kelly sprayed Yawar and those behind him with tommygun fire. The old priest fell dead, as well as five others with him. The crowd backed away, terrified. In the meantime, the glowing pit darkened with shadow and the cave seemed filled with a Titanic Presence.

The Voice again assailed Kelly's mind: *So you would not save me, Earthman! If I die, you will go with me!*

"Go to hell!" Kelly shouted at her. He snatched up a robe from one of the dead priests and filled it with loose Flame Crystals. Tossing the improvised sack over his shoulder, he then turned his tommygun toward Fitzgerald, who did not see him so intent was he upon firing Garner's mortar weapon at the huge stalactite.

"Traitor!" cried Yvonne, suddenly. She held the "*Sunn*-beam" in her hand. "Murderer!" Evidently she did not know what Fitzgerald was trying to do. She had only witnessed Yawar's death.

Kelly could not quite bring himself to shoot her down, so he turned and ran. Then he stopped, dropped to his knee, and fired at Fitzgerald—but not to save Sunn-lal. In the same instant, Fitzgerald fired the mortar. A rocket shell emerged and struck the stalactite. A huge explosion shook the cave, and the stalactite broke into great chunks. Tons of the radioactive substance fell into the pit.

Immediately, blinding flashes of light began to emerge from below, and ominous thunderings. Kelly saw Fitzgerald stagger, clutching a wounded arm that ran red with blood. The latter pulled at Yvonne, and she followed him.

In the growing, furious light of the pit, Kelly saw Garner's ship and knew simultaneously that there was a passage out, through the Dornalian Pit. He stumbled across shaking ground, dodging pieces of stalactites that fell from the ceiling. The pit rumbled, and the distant shouts of the fleeing priests mingled with the shrieks of the trapped Korlungs.

He found the landing ladder down and the hatch open. Climbing in, he raised the ladder and closed the hatch, thinking swiftly of Garner, whose whole life plan came to him now, clicking the last pieces of the puzzle into position. He saw how he had escaped from the priests to stow away on his own ship when *Ivya* returned to Earth, yet he had been planning always to return directly through the Dornalian Pit to the dwelling place of Sunn-lal and destroy her, first of all. Then he was obviously going to arise out of the depths and proclaim her death as marking the beginning of the New Order.

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Kelly ran to the control room, finding this ship to be designed exactly as the other one, but with certain internal improvements. In one minute he had the planetary rotors operating and was floating upward. He needed no searchlight to guide him through the ascending tunnel, as the pit behind him was turning into a miniature sun. . . .

Once he had emerged from the great Dornalian Pit above the broad marshes of the equatorial region, he discovered a new control on the instrument panel. The decal read: *Ionic Death Ray—Range, One Thousand Feet.*

In Kelly's eyes there was dark laughter. He had his crystals and his ship—the only space ship now in existence. Below him lay Mars, a very sparsely inhabited world—and he knew where the two small centers of life were concentrated. Why not make a clean sweep and have the planet all to himself?

He laughed at the cosmic proportions of his perfect crime. Mars—exclusive hideout of Robert W. Kelly, Master of Earth!

* * *

FITZGERALD walked hand in hand with Yvonne along the shore of the little lake at Kordyan Da'al. Above them, on the hill, were rows of community graves they had dug, where they had buried the dead.

"It's been about two months now since — since the Destruction," he said. "I wonder whatever happened to Kelly after he left Mars. He went off half-cocked, you know, without refueling. I doubt if he made it back to Earth."

"What I am trying to understand," the girl said, sadly, "Is whatever possessed him to destroy both the priests and all the Nalyans. He has left us a dead world, Jerry."

"It is a strange fate," answered the other. "We, alone, were still in the tunnels when he attacked this valley. The rest had already emerged, and they died. Now there are only the poor Korlungs, down below, if any of them survived the explosion of the pit. Maybe some of the poor devils got blocked by cave-ins and have died trying to dig their way out."

Yvonne looked up at him and smiled, affectionately. "You are the opposite of Kelly," she said. "So kind. You rescued me, body and soul, from —I don't know what!"

"Look!" he cried, suddenly pointing toward the Temple.

Yvonne looked, and she saw a small group of ghostly pale people groping their way blindly into the sunlight. "They are Korlungs!" she cried. Even as she looked, several dozens more emerged.

Fitzgerald took her hand and the two of them ran toward the blind troglodytes. When they reached them, they heard one of the older men crying out for help. He appeared to be their leader, because they followed the sound of his voice.

"Ka'ai!" cried the man. *"Djil yan dantu garanda!"*

"He cries for help," Yvonne translated. "He says he feels the sun."

"But they speak intelligently!" ex-

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claimed Fitzgerald.

Yvonne spoke to the man rapidly in Martian. "He says they have left the 'Other Life.' They are living in *this* world again!" She looked at Fitzgerald, eyes wide with the significance of the statement. "That means—"

"That Sunn-lal returned what was theirs—their *entity*. They are fully alive!"

"But they are such helpless creatures—blind!"

Fitzgerald's eyes were shining. "Their children will not be blind!" he exclaimed. "Yvonne, dearest, we are not alone in Eden!"

THAT NIGHT, after Yvonne had helped him feed almost fifty of the revived Korlungs, he sat with her on the veranda of Yawar's old palace, looking down at the little campfires of the others along the lake shore. He told her of all he could do for the new race. He could teach them to farm and mine and build. He would give them industries, steam, electricity, light.

"But Jerry," she said, "you told me that you knew how to build a space ship. We could return to Earth!"

"And high taxes?" he said. Then he smiled. "Give the Earthmen time, sweetheart. They'll come *here*—and soon enough! You see—down there on Earth I'd be a man without a country, perhaps owing a debt to society for crimes to which, perhaps, at least, I was an accessory. I have been wondering if a man who owes a debt to one society can at least clear up the Final Record by serving another society. Here on Mars I am a citizen of a world that has no countries. It's one world now. God made worlds, not nations. I am going to try to see that *this* world always will be —*one* world. . . ."

* * *

FAR ABOVE their heads and quite invisible to their eyes because of its remoteness in outer space, a new Martian satellite sped silently along its course. Kelly's fuel had run out just as something interfered with the operation of the rotors. He had fought the controls, but to no avail. He was locked in an orbit.

Frantically, he inspected the ship but to no avail. Fuel was out. Some acid had ruined the motor windings that drove the rotors. The ship was a dead duck. He had worked and figured three days without sleep. Finally, he slept fitfully, but with troubled dreams.

In his dreams, the voice of Sunn-lal haunted him.

"You were a traitor, darling! You left me to die! But I love you so *very* much! Not all of me went back to the Korlungs. What is left is here, lover, to keep you company on your lonely voyage that is without end! Of course I had to play a little prank on you for what you tried to do to me, and so it was I who destroyed your motors and tossed the spacesuit and the parachute out the airlock. It's just you and I together, dearest. When you see me you may not think me so beautiful, but your sense of values can be changed. I have given you a Flame

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rystal, love!"

After that first dream he woke up o find a Flame Crystal tied around is neck. And before him stood Sunn-l in the flesh—the Ultimate Woman, romising infinite ecstasies.

"Cleopatra!" he screamed. And the lobbering old cave hag grinned so hat her two fangs beamed upon him ather than her scarred-over eyes.

During the month that remained to him, Kelly substituted the doped dreams of the Flame Crystal addict for madness. As his addiction deepened, he did finally develop the illusion that Sunn-lal was his beautiful naked goddess, after all.

Mercifully, the air supply finally gave out. . . .

THE END

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FEARLESS FERGY

By Edward Jacobs

THE crystal chandelier in the oval study was burning late, shedding mellow light on the head of President Fergusen, thirty-sixth Chief Executive of the United States. It was a head grayed by cares of state, but still held courageously erect. The nickname, "Fearless Fergy," so often used by pro-Administration newspapers, was obviously appropriate.

The corps of presidential aides and secretaries had long since left their offices. Only the Secret Service staff remained on duty. But there was no need for them to guard the President's person from the very young man in the visitor's chair, whose features bore such a striking resemblance to those of the President.

"But, son," the President was saying, "how can you explain it, if you back out of the first interstellar expedition at the last minute?"

"Oh, I can go to the hospital and have my appendix removed, or something," the boy countered.

"You think people will swallow that gag?"

"Some will. Some won't. Some will say your son and heir is yellow, that the blood is running out. Maybe they are right. But I'd rather stay earthside and leave the question in doubt than blast off and prove it!"

The President smiled, a little ruefully. "The fact that I was aboard the first personnel-carrying moon rocket haunts your days, doesn't it, son?"

"You can say *that* again!" the boy agreed. "Oh, I'm proud of you, and all that. Who wouldn't be? But sometimes I wish people would let me forget whose son I am, just for a little while. Sometimes I wish I were just another anonymous guy, without so much to live up to. What people seem to overlook, is that, compared to Alpha Centauri, the moon was only a hop, skip, and a jump."

"It seemed quite an adventure into the unknown, at the time," the President said dryly. "Many people doubted we'd make it. The religious prayed for us. The cynical called us crazy, suicidal fools."

"It's no use trying to kid me into it," the boy said, bitterly, "I've made up my mind. I'm handing in my papers, even if it hurts your chances of another term."

"I don't see that it affects my political chances one way or the other. Or *your* political chances, either," the President said.

"Why, I've heard you say a hundred times, that you never could have been elected to the presidency, without that moon-hop publicity!"

"True enough. Before that, my

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There is always terror in facing the unknown—all Space is all of both!

name wasn't known to one-hundredth of one percent of the voters. I was merely one of eighty members of the California Assembly. But the thing uppermost in the public mind at that time, was the military importance of the moon. Though I represented only one small district, I was still the only crew member with any experience in public office whatsoever. My going appealed to the popular imagination. So the improbable happened. I was elected President without ever having been a U. S. Senator, or Governor of a State. But if I'm re-elected, it will be on my record; it will have very little to do with whether or not my son also becomes a space-jockey."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," the boy said, "I was a little worried about that aspect of it."

"That should be the least of your worries. So far as your own career is concerned, I doubt that lightning would strike twice in the same place. The military considerations don't enter into this Alpha Centauri expedition; there is no question of policing Earth to insure the peace. If you should run for public office, when and if you return from Alpha Centauri, the fact that you are my son might even weigh against you. The opposition party would scream that we were trying to establish a monarchy, or an interstellar empire."

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"I have no ambition to fill your job," the boy declared; "I've seen how much it's taken out of you."

"I wasn't thinking of that," the President said, gently, "I was thinking of the fact that they need you, on the ship."

"Need me? Why, they had thousands of applicants!"

"Exactly. You were one of six chosen from among thousands. Which indicates that the peculiar combination of chromosomes that makes a human fit for space-travel is not too common. Now that you've gone through all the preliminary tests, it's apparent that you've inherited the requisite physical traits."

"A lot of the fellows who applied are huskier than I am."

"You're not the athletic type, certainly. I remember, I used to worry about you, when you were ten or twelve. You always had your nose in a book, instead of playing baseball with the other boys. But there's no particular reason why a space crew must be composed exclusively of professional wrestlers. We've learned, somewhat to our surprise, that the ability to take plus gravity is not necessarily correlated with muscular development.

"When humans invent machines capable of taking them into unnatural environments, under water, beyond the sonic barrier, to high altitudes, or beyond Earth's gravitational pull, they also discover in certain members of the race peculiar physical aptitudes which have never before been noticed or valued.

"For instance, the Navy, for many years, chose their divers from among outstanding athletes until it was discovered that a muscular two-hundred-pounder might be bends-susceptible, while a smaller and less powerful man might have more flexible blood-vessels and a greater lung surface in proportion to body volume, so he could get rid of nitrogen faster.

"When we began selecting space crews, we depended more on actual tests and less on pre-conceived notions of general physical fitness. If that weren't true, how do you suppose *I* got on the moon-crew? There were thousands of applicants that time, too; many a man who could toss me over his shoulder without taking a deep breath was rejected."

"All right," the boy agreed, "so I've got the physical traits. They gave me the works and accepted me, anyway. But it looks as if I haven't inherited your emotional traits. 'Fearless Fergy,' they called you. The reporters still drag that one up whenever they can find an excuse. That's why I can't go. The other boys on the crew would find out that—that I'm afraid."

THE President leaned back in the great carved chair, and laughed heartily. "So *that's* what's bothering you! You think they won't call you 'Fearless Fergy the Second!' Of course you're afraid, son. You would not be normal if you weren't."

"You mean—" the boy faltered, "you mean *you* were scared, too, only you didn't show it?"

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"I was scared stiff," the President declared, "what's more, I showed it, plenty! When that moon rocket blasted off, I was crying like a baby!"

"*You*—crying?" the boy asked in amazement, "I never saw you cry!"

"I never was that badly scared any other time in my life. Listen, son, didn't you realize *why* the rest of the moon-crew gave me that nickname?"

"I didn't think about *why*, I guess. I just thought it was pretty swell they should call you that. Let's see, I was only about seven, wasn't I? I recall bragging about it, to the other kids in second grade."

"In other words, you took it literally. Well, I'll tell you. It was a joke. A cruel kind of joke. The rest of the crew resented my presence at first, you know. They grumbled because I had been accepted; they suspected bribery and all sorts of things. They just couldn't believe that the tests had been fair, that I could take more plus gravity than friends of theirs who were much more powerful physical specimens.

"They wanted to leave me behind, predicted I'd be bad for the expedition's morale. When their worst predictions came true, they rubbed it in. They called me 'Fearless Fergy' when I acted fearful, for somewhat the same reason that they called Bill Dobbs, who stood six-foot-four in his sox, 'Tiny.'"

"Tiny Dobbs? He was the martyr, wasn't he?"

"Yes. He died of acceleration sickness. He was the most magnificent animal of the bunch, the one who laughed at the dangers, and he was the first man buried on the moon. But I fooled them. I got to the moon and back alive. On the return trip, the boys changed their tone. The nickname I'd hated so bitterly became a compliment. It came to mean that I'd been the worst scared of the bunch, that I hadn't been ashamed to show it, but that I still had the nerve to go, in spite of being scared."

"I wonder whether your campaign manager knew all that, when he picked up 'Fearless Fergy' for a campaign slogan?"

The Chief Executive walked over to the vistor's chair, laid a comforting hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Does that make you feel any better, about what the interstellar crew would think of you, son? Does that make you feel less a misfit on this Alpha Centauri expedition?"

"It helps a lot," the boy admitted, "Funny, that I never thought of it like that before. But nicknames often do go by opposites, don't they? Remember how you used to call me 'Butch' when I was still wearing three-cornered pants?"

"Then you'll go on the first interstellar trip, son?" the President asked, "You couldn't possibly act any more frightened than I did, and you have a much better excuse."

"Yes, mother," the boy said resolutely. "I'll go."

THE END

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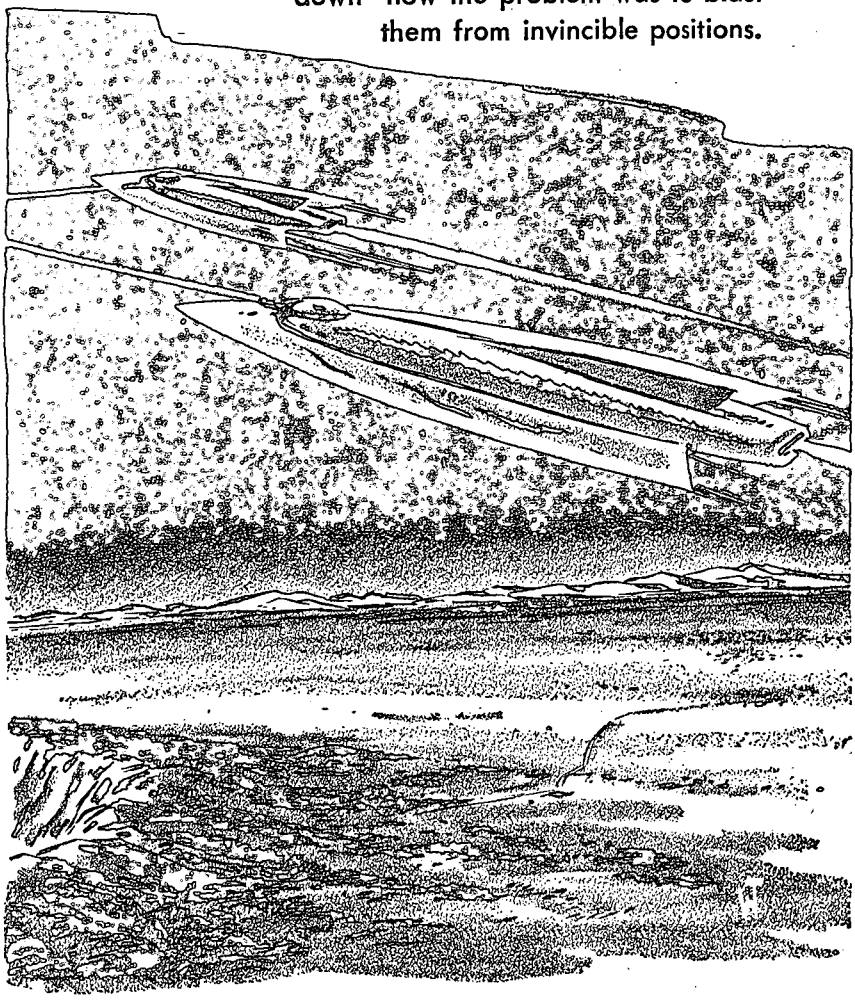
The SUN-SMITHS

By Richard S. Shaver

The Spayderines had tracked their quarry down—now the problem was to blast them from invincible positions.



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What Has Gone Before:

SENTENCED TO *life imprisonment on Prison Asteroid, June Tyne escapes, stealing a guardship. Hitching a ride on an asteroid, she is marooned. She faces death by starvation, but finds a metal door in a cliff-side. Opening it, she finds a corpse dressed in ancient clothing on a huge bed surrounded by gadgets. He proves to be in suspended animation, and when awakened by June, tells her he is Gates Agar, born in 1935, two hundred years before her time.*

He had discovered a buried city in Brazil at the bottom of a two-mile tunnel, and brought back evidence of a very ancient Earth civilization. But no one believes his story or artifacts. Among the artifacts is a metal booklet entitled "Comet-ramen Cabularia" which Agar deduces is a time-table of space-travel via comets! The language is weirdly like English, and Agar translates it enough to read the comet schedule.

Several years later his chance comes, when a private group builds a spaceship. He visits it in the night, is surprised by the guard, and in the scuffle, the ship is launched into space. Forced to use his comet time-table, Agar manages to land on the "comet" later found by June, and goes into suspended animation in the "waiting room" of the comet.

Now, awakened by June, he introduces her to the "dream records" and both go into suspended animation to await the junction with the next comet. They are awakened by the alarm, only to discover that a strange being has landed outside, and is entering.

The strange being proves to be a member of a spatial team of "sun-smiths" engaged in "repairing" damaged suns, damaged by attacks by an erring super-race.

He takes them captive, and transports him on his own ship back to his headquarters, a large planet which impresses June and Agar with its magnificence and its agrarian culture. There they are given a long series of treatments to remove any taint of disease from them, develop their bodies and minds, and are indoctrinated in many of the precepts of the super-civilization to which they belong.

In a meeting with Elders, they pass muster as members of the new race, and are adopted. There is a reason behind this, however, as it develops that the sun belonging to this planet is attacked by the same group which long ago attacked Earth's sun and made it poisonous to super-life. The Elders wish to use Agar and June in a search of Earth for the culprits.

There is a long chase through space during which a battle is fought with the sun-tamperers, and after long effort, the planet's sun is saved from great damage, although enough damage has been done to cause the plan-

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et's vegetation to die off and create a serious problem.

June and Gates convince the Elders, and the sun-smiths, that back on Earth may be found the present hiding place of the sun-tamperers, and a battle fleet is sent, trailing the fleeing ships of the tamperers. Approaching Earth, a stand is put up by the enemy warships, but the ships Agar is after flee under cover of the battle. The sun-smith evades action, and continues the pursuit, which is apparently abandoned as the solar system is neared. The sun-smith has followed a hunch, and guesses that the enemy ships are based on the moon, so he proceeds directly there at great speed and arrives before the enemy ships.

Deep in a large crater, under the moon's surface, a city is found, and also the berthing platforms of the enemy ships. The sun-smith's hunch was right. Landing, they discover a simple, troglodyte civilization, its members slaves of the sun-tamperers. There in the moon they work to provide the fuel necessary for the sun-tamperers' ships, and other things required in their program of rendering suns temporarily poisonous so that their planets can be taken over.

The leader of these troglodytes is taken captive, and by means of a hypnotic control, his mind is searched, and he reveals all the secrets of the tamperers, who now live inside the Earth in deep caverns, where they have a vast system of degenerative pleasures, catering to the wayward sons and daughters of all races of space. It is a vast gambling hall and pleasure house engaged in all types of vice, and now very rich.

The troglodyte is released, all memory of his experience erased from his mind, and from the minds of his people, and then the sun-smiths destroy the enemy base.

Plans are now made to proceed to Earth and scout out the vice-den, and prepare for a great attack on it. The main fleet of the sun-smiths is still far away, but coming up rapidly in answer to a call. It is decided to make a sortie to discover what means can be used to overcome the defenses of the Earth despots, although Agar warns it will be a dangerous undertaking.

The sun-smith decides to make the attempt, and they take off from the cavern city and emerge from the crater. Suddenly they are gripped in the same terrible paralysis and mind control they used on the troglodytes, and are drawn inexorably as captives to the battleships of the enemy. As they reel into mindless submission, they are dimly aware that all is lost, and that they will now be taken into the Earth vice-den and made slaves to the sun-tamperers.

Now go on with the story:

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FOR what seemed hours Agar sat helpless, blind and unthinking, with only a vague consciousness of impending doom in his mind. He knew well enough the others in the ship were likewise blind and held helpless, unable even to think. He was able to guess they were being towed to some location, probably on earth, where they would be "interviewed" and then destroyed, as these Spayderines had interviewed and destroyed the Valudin crews. He was not even able to have an emotion, his coming death but a dim and meaningless fact before him.

It was in this dull and captive fashion that lovely young June Tyne, adventurous daughter of earth's illicit space traffic, and Gates Agar, pioneer who first of all modern men found the means of stepping across interstellar space, returned again to their native planet.

They did not even know they were back on Earth as they stepped from the Spayderine craft onto the soft needle-strewn soil of a pine forest, somewhere in Asia. The season was late summer, and the clouds drifted sensually, showing all the fat protuberances that clouds delight in varying. Before them, seated on ornate gold-metal chairs upholstered in embroidered brilliant-hued silks, were seven of the most peculiar appearing specimens of humankind Agar ever expected to meet.

Like the clouds above them, their bodies had many soft protuberances, rounded and varying as they shifted idly in their seats . . . but there the resemblance to anything heavenly ended.

Before these seven moved an elfin, naked figure, childish and beautiful, offering sweetmeats from a tray. The color of the seated elephantine creatures was a pale saffron. Agar, gradually awakening from the spell the mind-deadening vibrants had cast on him, knew this saffron skin as characteristic of the Valudin upper classes. As his mind came fully awake, the full horror of what he faced struck him, and his knees buckled with the shock. These creatures were old, healthy but so old his mind refused to think about the evident fact. Age, defied and beaten off by some secret process, had had its revenge by making them fat.

June nudged him. "Fat and ugly and old as the hills! These are the boys we came to see, Gates. Come to and act diplomatic or they'll broil us over that charcoal blaze warming their slender thighs."

Gates looked about him, glad to get his eyes away from their wakened inspection of his captors. There was present before this group only themselves, he found, and he wondered what had become of the Mervan crew. Several armed guards stood behind the seated figures, who were all munching at fruit and oddly shaped goodies which slave girls presented to them at intervals. A strange reaction of revulsion went through Gates as his eyes slowly took in the fact of the slave girl's utter nakedness. It wasn't her nudity that did it,

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for she was lovely, it was the fact that she was these creatures utter property, and her not older than sixteen—and it was something far more than that. It was the black lack of humanity in those bloated faces, the eyes undiscernible behind the rolls of flesh. Whatever the creatures were, it was only too obvious they had long ceased to be human.

"You do not like us, Earthling?" came the sensing in his mind of a cold mental question, and he shivered as the sensitive cells of his brain shrank from that contact, and his inner self shrieked silently inside him—evil, evil, evil!

Gates shook his head, answered orally as though they had spoken. "I do not know you. Give me time.

"There will be a lifetime for you to know us. You will slave for us until you die, as do all lesser races. We are the Lords of whom your legends have told you. We are worshipped as Gods by those of your surface people who know us. Our work is often pointed to as God's own hand. Get on your knees, Earthling, and give thanks we have not slain you!"

That voice! He recognized it! In his childhood, later in life, at different times, he had heard that same accent, in his sleep, in his dreams—Agar gasped, as the mocking knowledge was vouchsafed him: these creatures were of the Valudin! The Valudin watched over the people of Earth, to make sure they did not advance too far! In his sleep, Valudin minds had pried and poked, and his mind had remembered . . . remembered, though consciously he had never known they existed. Yet Valudin watchers had known him!"

"Yes, Earthchild, we rule Earth, and you have heard our voices in your sleep when the mind is apt to receive impressions foreign to its waking nature. Now bow down, and go to your place with the others."

Some outer force, more powerful than his inner anger and refusal, made him bow, made him back away, leaving June standing there alone before those fat, monstrous creatures.

DAYS passed for Gates Agar in a blank and repetitious despair. Some block remained in his mind from the shocking experiences he had undergone. He knew his name, he knew something of where he was, but little else. He missed June Tyne, but could not remember how he came to know her so well or why he never saw her.

He found himself drudging at meaningless tasks under a compulsion he could not fully understand, and he gazed wonderingly at the guards who paced beside his work gang daily, whip in hand and stun-gun on naked thigh. For they were not Earthmen: they were aliens, and everything about the tunnels where he labored mining ores told him he was no longer on Earth—yet he knew very well he *was* on Earth, and a native! But these caverns were ancient, and they had never been built by Earthmen as he knew them. He gazed wonderingly into his own mem-

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ories of his boyhood, of his school-days. He could remember vividly every detail of his life up to his college graduation program—but after that he drew only blanks as he tried to piece the fragments of vivid adventure together. How had he come to be here in these caverns, under the thumb of these yellow-skinned cruel-lipped people whom he could only understand when they thrust their unwelcome thought through his mental defenses in some harsh order which he must obey or die! He obeyed. He swung his pick and he plied his shovel. He wheeled his barrows of ore and dumped them into the mine cars. He helped to push them onto the tracks where the conveyor chains seized and took the ore away out of his ken. Beside him labored a tall green-eyed man whom he learned was named Palan, but he shortened the name to "Pal," because he liked him very well. This individual often eyed him strangely. He felt the fingers of mental probing within his mind, and knew the man meant well by him; but his hurt mind refused to let him in, and they could not speak to each other except orally, in short and meaningless phrases.

Then came a day when he was singled out by a hard-eyed woman who came stalking through the sleeping barracks, and he followed her obediently along with a score of others to some new set of tasks.

He found his new job had been acquired because of his appearance. The hard-eyed woman who had picked him out was a dealer in slaves who supplied the Valudin pleasure houses with youthful slaves of good appearance. In blank-minded obedience, Agar went through a course of revolting training for his work in these places. His memory stored much useless information about these queer yellow-skinned people who had enslaved him. He could not remember how he came to be in these rocky halls, but he knew he was deep underground, and he knew he was on Earth—but there was little by which to make sure he was not mistaken about this.

His training consisted of treatments to strengthen his body for the ordeals to come, and he found himself without will to resist the strange stimulative rays that played on him for hours every day—coming to look forward to the infernal pleasure with quivering limbs and every sense in his body keyed up to anticipation of the weirdly intense ecstasy the rays induced. He felt stronger and healthier after each "treatment," and at the same time somehow degraded . . . but he had no least idea of what was in store for him and his strangely dumb and reticent companions.

There came a day when he was declared ready—and found himself under the ray compulsion, compelled to board a car with a score of his fellow slaves, all young and handsome men, some of Earth, and some he was sure were . . . he could not think of the word.

The Valudin gay blades, rich and dissolute, male and female (and as

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often a third sex), who could find nowhere a safe haven for their bestialties but in the dens the secret deviltries of their ruling classes had caused them to build on Earth, had for centuries (centuries whose dark beginnings were hidden even from themselves), made a custom of coming to the pleasure dens in Earth's ancient caverns periodically. They paid handsomely for the privilege of indulging themselves in every torture their queerly twisted natures created in their active minds. They were a handsome people: their forebears, long ago, had been as fine and strong and good as the original elder race of Earth. But those secret cliques among them who had conceived the sun-excitation plot, and had by its use destroyed the original Elder race and all the other races of the neighboring planets in the solar system, had instituted a reign of absolute license in the vast system of caverns they had fallen heir to after the disappearance of those who had built them. The years had grown many and the original crew of cruel piratical Valudin "nobles" had given way to their descendants. The rule of the caverns of earth had changed hands again and again in various murderous plots. Nearly seven thousand years had passed since the first Valudin invaders had built their secret homes beneath the surface of Earth. In all that time the secret had been kept from the other members of the Unicourt. The Valudin lords had kept their record in the court apparently honorable and fair, deploring the catastrophes that occasionally annihilated their neighbors, and charitably moving in to "rehabilitate" the survivors of the sun-excitations that killed off so many who might otherwise have rivaled their power.

All these seventy centuries a servile group had remained in the Earth caverns, serving the periodic visits of their overlords and their friends with every manner of indulgence—and through the centuries they had grown very skillful, and had bred up a race of slaves who from their first conscious thought were carefully bent toward serving the whims of the powerful visitors who were the real owners. It was into the hands of these born and bred inhabitants of a land of utter depravity that Agar and his strangely numb-minded companions were given, to learn to suffer what was expected of them. To suffer obediently if that was wanted, or in a spirit of reveiry if that was desired.

Agar soon learned that he no longer needed a will of his own. One was provided for him whenever there was any question that he might wish to use his own. He knew this was done from a distance by an unseen operator with a ray device which was capable of many curious things, not the least of which was to provide for him all the nerve force he might need to survive the strange tortures his body continually underwent. His mind remained disconnected from his subconscious mind, so that he went about in a kind of daze.

How long this existence went on, he could never after recall . . . But

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one day he found himself facing a very lovely young woman, and simultaneously found his own will released strangely from the all-compelling synthetic nerve stimulation which had ruled his every waking moment. He heard her saying: "I have not come here for pleasure. I have asked for you. I have asked for your release from the make-ray, so that I may speak with you and experience the true self within you, learn to know you. But you must never speak to any other of what goes on between us, for I have bribed the operator of the rays in this chamber, so that we may be alone together without interference from anyone."

Haltingly Agar found his tongue and spoke in the language of Mervan, which he could not completely remember learning. "I do not understand. My mind has been in abeyance, my body not my own."

"You will understand. I have had your mind treated so that your memories will return now, and you will be able to tell me all I wish to know of this place. Think hard, where were you born, how came you to be here?"

Struggling, Agar found the mental mists lifting.

Suddenly, with a rush, his memory opened, and he recalled the battle with the Valudin ships and his own capture. He remembered now their crimes of sun-tampering, and the Mervan attempt to guard their green sun from the Valudin plot. His eyes narrowed, and he studied the face of this yellow-skinned female. He saw that she was not as the others, sensuous-lipped debauchees that they were, but a cleaner, younger type of woman. He had learned much, the hard way, and he had learned hate and caution.

"I will help you, sweet maid," he smiled, though his hate of everything Valudin rose in his throat and choked him. "On one condition," he added.

"I will grant that condition, if I can." she assured him, and he found her smile honest, if a bit diffident.

"The condition is that you do not cause my mind to be blocked again when you leave, as I might, with my memory intact, find a way of escape."

"No one has ever escaped from these caverns, man! It would be more merciful for a man of your nature to become again a memoryless robot. What you go through daily would drive a normal being insane in a week!"

"Nevertheless leave me my mind, or I will tell you nothing."

Her head came up proudly. "Very well, I will arrange it, though it will cost me more than I care to think about. I can afford it. Now speak, and tell me all. Or would you rather I sent you back, and engaged another?"

A chill of fear ran through Agar that he might yet lose this strange fortunate occurrence through asking too much. "How often can we be together, and what is your name? There is much to tell. It can not be done in one day . . ."

"I will give you an hour a day with me for a week, and if that is not

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enough, I will arrange for more. Do not ask too much of me. My name is No-Name, to you.

"Strange name, for a girl," mused Agar, putting his new found will to work awaking his sluggish mind. Then he sat down cross-legged and began carefully to tell her everything his awakened memory would recall of what went on in this secret Hell where any wish would be granted, provided one paid. He had seen slaves murdered fiendishly, for the pleasure of it. He had seen children offered up to torture at all ages. He had seen . . . and he proceeded to tell her every deep depravity that was cultivated here in the name of pleasure.

They two sat alone on the deep cushions, and the rays of pleasure played over them unheeded while he talked and No-Name listened, and prompted him when he stopped. Once a step sounded outside, and she hastily threw off her robe and clasped him to her breast, smiling drunkenly and wantonly, so that as the door was pushed open and a head peered in they would be seen to be "properly" occupied. As the unsteady step of the drunken reveler receded, she flushed like a young girl as his eyes regarded her naked body gravely. She put her robe back on.

"So," whispered Agar, "you fear so much the wrong ones may learn what you do? How do you know those who took your bribe money won't betray you?"

"Because those I bribed hate what is done here, the same as your true nature hates what you are forced to do. But there are spies upon spies here, who will tell the old beasts who rule of anything that does not look right, and I do not wish to die, Earthling."

"You have a beautiful body, girl. . . . Your purpose is perhaps less worthy than you think. Is it to be one of those books that people read to be shocked, and to experience vicariously the thrills they are too cowardly to seek in reality? Or is it to be a virtuous book, deploring hypocritically the evil that is here disguised as pleasure?"

Her eyes bored into him in sudden anger and she tugged the scanty robe tight over her young breasts and sleek strong hips. "Neither, Gates Agar! Can you not recognize me? Are you so blind after all I have done? Why did God make men so particularly blind, of all the beasts that he created? And, little man, when the long nights come after I have left you, and you lie alone, remember this: it was I who awakened you when you slept forever in the Cometram and it was I who brought your mind awake when it slept in the den of vileness here."

She stood up as if to leave him in anger, and he recoiled in utter unbelief. "Not you, not June . . . oh my own, how have you done this, and why this way? You come to me, with no plan, with nothing—Why have you? Tell me, dammit? What goes on? Explain!"

"I can never forgive you! I expected to be folded into your arms. I came expecting love . . . And you

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do not even know me! You look at me with narrowed eyes, hating me, afraid to let me see you hate me."

He bowed his head. "It was the yellow dye on your skin, June! And as for love, it will be a long time before I feel clean enough to even say that word again. Tell me, how has it been for you?"

"Not too bad, Gates. I was taken and made into a ladies-maid, and my owner, after finding I had had the elder Cometram training, awakened my mind secretly so that I might use what I had learned from the records in operating her many mechanisms. She does not know and cannot learn the intricacies of many of the Elder mechanisms which they still use here. So, as she is very famous and well-liked and a privileged character of the Valudin blood, I likewise have been allowed much freedom, for she needs my skill as a ray operator in her business. And if you think my soul feels clean after what I have been doing, and that I can say the word love without gagging a little, you are wrong. But in spite of all that, I still love you, and I have come to you with a plan.

She bent her head suddenly, and the tears came to her eyes. She moved toward him stumblingly and he took her in his arms as she broke into sobs. "And now you growl at me like a husband—Oh, Gatesy, I have schemed so hard to save you!"

"From a fate worse than death," Gates managed to grin. "Look, June, just talk plain United States. Tell me, as soon as you have had your cry out, just what you plan."

She sniffled, dried her eyes, straightened her hair, and he kissed her solemnly. "I made you talk to make sure your mind was really in working order again. You know, all the slaves of the Valudin in the Earth caverns are mindless robots. I think our old legend of the *zombi* comes from them. But to get to the point, I brought you a pill. Tonight you take it, and you will get very sick. A sick slave is immediately sold, to get the money out of them before they die. My mistress is in the plot and she will see that her agent buys you, for me. So, you will be my slave, dear Gatesy."

Gates frowned, though his heart warmed as if from a swift thaw in an icy region within his breast. "So, your slave. From slave to the slave of a slave! My social status won't be improved, will it?"

She managed a smile, though her eyes were still wet, and her hands trembled. Gates was strangely moved too, and he pressed her to his breast again and again, even as his lips mocked her with almost bitter words.

"Later, with more freedom, we can perhaps work something else out. One step at a time; we have a long way to go."

"We are rather in a pit, at that," Gates smiled, "A slave-maid, and a slave-maid's slave. Whatever would our friends think?"

"If you knew," she broke into fresh tears, which she checked as quickly, "our friend Palan is a haggard wreck from the work he does,

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nd the others, many are dead . . ." or an instant her eyes gleamed into iis, and his forgotten faculty of tele-)athic sensitivity rang a bell of warn-ng. He heard her mind demanding)f him: "Never think of this again!" \nd what it was he was not to think)f he knew better than to consider)verlong. But the day might come.

THAT morning, after his supposed night of revelry with the young debauchee "from Valudin," he took the pill she had given him and his bowels rebelled on schedule. He lay on his slave's pallet retching and utterly wretched. The hard-eyed woman who owned him came and looked at his pallid face and within an hour he was on the huge and ancient ontramin bound for the slave market . . . and a new job beside June Tyne behind the scenes of the pleasure dens of the Valudin cavern dwellers. He and June Tyne were obliged to operate the stimulative pleasure rays, and to act as the hidden spirit behind the nightly revels held by their mistress, for the Valudin credits that could be so easily drawn from the most reluctant pockets when the rays caused synthetic emotions of generosity and affection to overflow.

June had become an artist in her weird profession, and though they both despised every act they nightly committed, there was the consolation that they were at the same time robbing the hated Valudin murderers. There was also the pleasure of allowing the good and decent youngsters who came into their influence to go unharmed and unsinned against, while at the same time they caused the more repulsive and hateful of the Valudin nobles to spend more than they wanted to and drink vastly more than they could comfortably hold. But all such acts had to be done very subtly and unnoticeably, so that no one could say they did more than it seemed they should have done.

After a few weeks, the two centuries Agar had lain under the Elder record rays began to show in his work, for he knew how to turn the ancient mechanisms to uses the Valudin experts never dreamed they were created for, and he taught June how to convert an ordinary stimulative ray into a deadly penetrative ray that would kill miles away. As the months became many, he began the secret construction of a device the use for which he dared not think about but disguised his thought as he worked on it when the guests lay drunk and asleep and the feast chambers of their mistress lay in a chaotic mess of fallen drunkards, naked slave girls sleeping on benches, fragments of food and spilled wine and the drugs with which the wine was liberally spiked scenting the whole place with the odor they had learned to recognize as peculiarly Valudin.

There was one source of intermittent energies impinging upon his telaug screens, interrupting his work, that Gates longed to learn about: At last he managed to atune a sensitive augmentive device so that it gave him the thought of the creatures ac-

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tive in that distant spot. He learned it was one of the original space fortresses where vast and powerful destructive rays reached out into space beyond the moon, and where there were always watchers on duty, scanning the skies for possible attack. As the days went by, and he listened to their thought, he learned that Earth was under siege by a fleet just beyond the range of their powerful rays, waiting, always waiting a chance to come in. Remembering the fleet he had seen thrown around the Mervan sun to protect it against the Valudin plotters, he knew well enough what fleet waited out there, but he could not guess what it was they waited for,—and then he realized they meant only to blockade the Valudin within Earth's caverns no matter how long, even for centuries. He wondered how the transient trade from the Valudin city-planets came through this blockade. As time passed, he realized that if that fortress could be knocked out, it was quite possible the Mervan fleet would be able to make an entrance into the caves in this area.

He learned in time that the ships that came through were only those bearing passengers inward, that none were allowed to leave.

So Gates Agar and June Tyne labored for their mistress, studied the minds of the Valudin, learned that Earth had been under siege from space for some time. That the food and dainties and customers bearing money and drugs and other things less mentionable were coming less and less frequently, as the non-return of any visitor to Earth was noticed even though the secrecy surrounding all knowledge of Earth's cavern sin-palaces made this fact unnoticeable to the general populace of the Valudin empire.

So Gates knew that the Mervan warfleet had cut Earth off from contact with space. Ships could go in, as that made so many more mouths for the cavern lords to feed, while none could leave with news of the blockade. Hope rose in his heart, but he feared to think about it, for he knew that such as they were not supposed to understand their masters.

By now, they were both well acquainted with the transients who frequented their mistresses place, but found themselves at a loss to get a line on the real masters of the caves whom Agar remembered only vaguely from his first days, before his mind went entirely blank from the usual Valudin treatment for slaves. From an occasional picture in the mind of one or another of the permanent personnel of the pleasure dens, they caught a glimpse of one of those overstuffed ancients who had lived too long. So long that they were but a weird form of life reduced to a mean spirit that knew only to grasp for survival by every repression which would keep the young and the clean and the strong from power.

On both weighed more and more every day the misery of the slaves upon whom the whole weight of the caverns rested. The grinding misery of the workers, the utter enslavement and destruction of their normal na-

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tures under the dark pall of control rays which directed every synthetic drive within their numbed minds. Gates Agar and June Tyne became hard and hateful and changed. Hidden behind the anonymity of their slave existence, yet in absolute control of the hundreds who patronized their place, they planned how to use that power to strike at the terrible crushing power which made of all humanity it touched a thing unmentionable. They were protected in this planning by the terrific sensitivity of the instruments they used, which augmented every electrical impulse in their range (and it was an enormous range). These instruments augmented every mental impulse, and when on diffuse spread, provided them with a complete surrounding field of awareness so sensitive that no mind could even think of them, no other ray operator turn a beam in their direction, without them being fully aware. It gave them privacy when they learned to so operate their ancient equipment, and Agar worked on his secret weapon while June entertained the drunken clientele with every pleasure an ingenious ancient race had devised to make life rich and worth living.

Their mistress' name was Teonie Delon. Teonie was slightly plump, and beginning to show her age. But under June's skillful manipulation of the stimulative rays and beneficial vibrants, she seemed the ne plus ultra of feminine pulchritude. She was very grateful to June, and for two reasons she never allowed June Tyne to be seen by any Valudin citizen. One reason was she was far too good looking—the more powerful nobles would find a way to seize her for more personal uses than a ray operator. The other reason, every other mistress of such an establishment as hers would try to get her away from Teonie if they knew how capable she was. Which suited June to a tee, and Agar quite as much. They had only one difficulty—the other operators who took their places at the end of their twelve hour shifts might discover the weapon on which he spent his time. But they proved to be mindless slaves, kept so by Teonie's consent, for you could not have too many people knowing your business when it was as devious as Teonie's. The chances were they would never discover that the broken old metal hulk over which he had spent so much time was anything but what it seemed, a mechanism broken some time in the past centuries and never repaired, for there were many such which no present day mind had the ability to repair.

THERE came a day when he was ready, as ready as he would ever be, and there was no longer anything to wait for. As they came on duty, he started the power source under the ancient device humming, letting it build up in its "thyrons" the type of fission the ancients used, which does not give off radiations, but enormous amounts of a certain type of electron, an electron which can be absorbed by the human body and pro-

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vides energy, the same kind of energy manufactured by the body itself. As he closed the circuit which started the thyrons producing in the thing he had recognized as a Master ray, the most powerful built by the ancients, he schooled his mind to a blank receptivity, listening intently, for he knew that any thought that occurred nearby would be picked up by the swiftly growing magnetic field and broadcast to the surrounding caverns at great strength. As he listened, he heard every mental impulse for miles, the growing field reaching out and augmenting every mind deafeningly here at the source. At the first inquisitive thought whose source he could not place and discount, he was ready to trip a breaker and short out his powerful thyrons until a later time to avoid detection. But he heard only the sleepy morning deadness of these caverns, where everyone slept in the beneficial rays under which they lay and stored up energy for the next night's debauch.

He switched on the screen, swung the focus lever right and left, then forward, looking for the fortress that held off the Mervan ships. He would know one of those ancient bulky bodies when he saw it, and here under his hand was an instrument which could peer through the living rock for many miles, and focus to a pin-point of ultra magnification upon any spot he wished.

So began Agar's campaign of extermination. One by one his adapted ancient ray quite as powerful now as anything the rulers themselves possessed, picked out the hidden power-rays, behind triple-guarded doors, and one by one he triggered the little expansion device which caused, at the exact center of focus, a sudden swelling concentration of mutual repellent ions which tore apart the matter about them. So one by one the hearts of the Valudin masters burst, and the guards at the doors went on guarding the fortress in which the ancient beasts were dead.

Agar knew very well he could not single-handedly lay low the whole ruling class in the vast network of caverns which reached around the world on seven levels. But he could and did clean out the whole area about him of every Valudin capable of giving an order, and every Valudin warrior capable of firing a weapon. The only men he left alive were mindless slaves or the very few like himself, who hated and waited interminably—and now at last were seeing their prayers answered.

When his eyes lifted from the huge screen whereon the last of the hated ones nearby ceased breathing, June nodded and went swiftly away. He touched the sleeping Teonie with a ray, and she sank into a deeper sleep from which he knew she would not awaken for many hours, the time it would require for a certain tiny section of nerve to heal into connection again. For he could not be bothered just now with the fearful queries of an aging pleasure-woman, and he had no wish to harm her.

Within fifteen minutes June was back with Palan and two others of

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his crew who had survived, and a sad reunion it was, for Palan was as Agar had been, unaware of his own name or of where he was or why. But the healing properties of the powerful beneficial rays, put to their correct usage of healing, rather than reviving the flagging energies of a sated debauchee, soon healed the severed nerves in their minds. The first words Palan said were: "No one in the universe can live in peace with these monsters bred in Earth's caverns. Nor will they, from this day."

Palan went immediately to work, as Agar had done, adapting the ancient powerful mechanisms that stood about unused, not understood for what they were by the degenerate Valudin personnel. And within hours there was pulsing out into space an intense beam of terrific energy. But while they worked against time, the news of what had happened in their area of the caverns had gone out around the seven levels of the ancient underworld, circling the world by swift ray exchange. The Valudin thought they were invaded, that some powerful enemy had blotted the life from a huge area of the caves and was rapidly assembling force to drive them from their ancient seat of power. Faced for the first time in many centuries with actual formidable resistance presented with a sample of their ruthless methods of extermination in the thousands of deaths that had been reported before Agar had finally slain the last of those who could give out the news, they were marshaling every force at their command for an onslaught on the threatened area.

Rolling toward them through the hundreds of possible approaches, for the seven levels each contained broad highway tubes capable of carrying six to eight great vehicles abreast, they came, huge and ancient war tanks of the Elder race, capable of a vast output of destructive energy. Behind the tanks came the open lorrie-like "cassold-cars," each carrying hundreds of the mindless slaves. Tied across the front of each monstrous tank were dozens of young naked slave girls, spread-eagled, making it impossible to fire a beam at a tank without killing several slaves —which fact gave them to think the rulers must know this was an uprising, rather than some invader.

"A typical ruse of the derrish mind . . ." mused Palan watching the formidable onrush of the ancient war-tanks. "How can we stop them without harming those poor debased children?"

His mind devised an answer, and in an instant he was at work, using the weapon Agar had repaired, the expansion energy beam, directing it along the cavern roof ahead of the rushing tanks. Tons of rock smashed down as he worked, while June plied his whole body with a flood of pure stimulation. The stepped-up beams gave a body the power to move at rates of speed beyond belief, so that Palan was moving his arms at a speed so rapid the eyes could see only a blur.

Thus working, Palan closed off the main cavern tubes ahead of the tanks

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and stopped that threat temporarily without harming the living shields the tanks bore.

As he strove thus in a blur of movement, Agar and the two revived comrades of Palan were sending along the beam pulsing into space a high speed recording of the Spayderine SOS. Agar used the finder screen to direct the beam toward those areas of space from which they had come, where the green sun blazed in emerald splendor upon a race free of destructive intent, while he searched the skies for some sign of the besieging fleet.

He knew that in many places the Spayderines kept alarm posts, where in lonely everlasting duty devoted attendants scanned receiver tapes, eternally clicking off a record of every impulse received. No ship could move through space, no space-battle take place, no atomic bomb explode, without leaving a record upon the Spayderine's alarm post record tapes.

These posts formed a network of extreme sensitivity all through known space, overlapping spheres of receptivity, so that any powerful beam sent toward the Spayderine area of influence must inevitably leave a trace.

As Palan completed his ultra-rapid work of playing Agar's expansion beam across the cavern roofs, he turned to the three men to say: "If we can hold them, they will rescue us. If we can't hold them, which is most probable, they will avenge us!"

But now, destroying their own living shields, the tanks had thrown ahead of their thundering treads a rock-melting heat vibration and were pushing on slowly through the molten flowing debris, the bodies lashed to their fronts smouldering corpses. Agar, noting their advance, leaped again to the controls of his Master beam and sent lashing into each tank as it came in range a lightning-like charge of the explosive energy. As each tank he struck at went out of control, it turned slowly, ponderously, to bring up against the rounded tube wall, partially blocking the tube ways. Those behind, seeing the death of those in front, began to back-track at high speed, too rapidly for those behind to get out of the way—and a tangle resulted which jammed the tube ways for miles. Palan made a swift adjustment in Agar's mechanism, throwing it out of connection with the humming thyrons beneath it.

"Let the force accumulate, then release it suddenly—you will see it double its range in momentary bursts."

"Now!" came his voice, as his ears told him the thyrons were ready to burst with accumulated energy—and Agar tripped his release trigger, to watch two great war tanks burst suddenly into fragments from the terrific release of energy within them. Again and again they used this technique, until each head of each column pushing toward them was a flaming mass of wreckage. But the living shields which protected the tanks which had not used the heat rays stayed their hands, for they could not bring themselves to destroy their fellow slaves,

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however terrible the need for it.

Palan sat down suddenly within the ancient machine room overlooking the rococo feast room where the fragments of the last debauch still littered the floor and slave girls ran about screaming in fright from the sounds and the pulsing energies the Mervan warriors were releasing above their heads.

"I've got to think of something they don't expect . . . I want to reach behind that column, way behind it, where the old bottoms rest on their fat, waiting for their bully boys to do their killing for them." He was talking orally, a habit he must have picked up during his mindless days as a slave, when his telapathic powers were in paralyzed abeyance.

"Send several of these beams along the same line, they will make a conductive channel, then fire the expander along that channel"—suggested June, remembering how she herself had used several aligned beams for listening in where she was not supposed to be able to reach.

"They will only short it out with an energy absorbing beam before it reaches them. They rest behind a screen of absorbent beams which no ordinary ray can smash through," he explained absently, his brows furrowed in concentration.

"If we'd had time to mine those tubes, we could really have . . ." thought Agar, his mind whirling with the need for an idea—but he thought of that living shields and knew he could not use that tactic.

"Gas bombs, if we could release gas bombs on this side of the rocks we blasted down, then let them come through into the gas, it would knock them out, not harm them, some potent but harmless sleep gas . . . nitrous oxide, something like that . . ." suggested June.

"Tanks are proofed against gas entry, they would just close their air intake until they were past the gas area . . ." he explained, "and where do we get the gas?"

"Wake up as many more slaves as you can," Palan ordered. "As soon as you get a man into useful shape, send him to one of the Valudin nests, Agar can direct him to the places. In each of those nests of theirs is a collection of powerful rays. Some of them will be useful, and at least we will not be facing them alone."

June and Agar began the work of reviving the numb minds of the Mervan slaves, of whom there were only a few hundred in all the thousands of slaves. Most of them were of Earth's surface world, brought down secretly during variously contrived disasters, so that the missing would be supposed to have been destroyed. Only Mervan minds had experience in the use of any of this type of mechanism, and many of them would prove to have no knowledge of the Elder ray machines since they were largely of different design from the Mervani.

"How about boarding one of the Valudin space craft, there are dozens of them in the upper caverns, they make regular trips, taking off at night . . ." June was thinking, know-

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ing Palan could hear her. And knowing as quickly it was useless, hearing Palan say: "And be shot down before we left the atmosphere? That is no answer. We have them in confusion. We have struck telling blows. Just our four pairs of hands have knocked out a large section of their power. We will have to fight it out as we have begun, and there must be some way to stop those blundering fools from their advance without killing the living shields . . ."

Agar laughed, suddenly, like a man out of his wits. "When the government wanted to close a road in my day, they just put up a sign that said: 'Road Closed. Detour to the left . . .'"

Palan slapped his leg. "It's possible! It would gain us a little time. Some of the slaves who are not too dull can make the signs in the Valudin symbols. They can place them before they burst through the last of the rocks . . . and if they ignore the signs, I can always blast some more cavern roof down on them. But sooner or later, they will pick us off. They fear to *channel*, or their rays would have sought us out . . ."

The slaves obeyed them as they would have obeyed any order, mindlessly, dumbly, and the silly "Road Closed" signs were placed, rerouting the oncoming armies to tube-ways right and left which did not even approach the area. The slaves were sent along the ways, placing arrows and signs in the Valudin pictographs, routing the advancing masses of men and machinery and rumbling wheels all into one narrow tube-way which led around the area.

"They're stupid enough to follow those signs, thinking their own advance forces have placed them. And if they do, they'll have a snarl of traffic they'll never untangle."

"What did you say about their fear of channeling?" asked June, alert to anything different from her experience with ray operation.

"Every ray must use a conductive carrier wave. There are several types of carrier waves, and in warfare, any of them can be used from either end. That is, if I know how to do the trick, I can send destructive force back along the conductive channel their ray uses just as well as they can send the same toward me. I can drop a high potential current upon their carrier wave in such a way that it blasts their generative mechanism into molten fragments, if they give me an opportunity. I can do this without channeling, by crossing my beam over a grounding beam, a fan of energy which is automatically adjustable so that it will let my wave through, but will short and ground any additional energy from the enemy source. It is hard to explain, but simple in practice. If there were high voltage electric lines in operation, I could use a conductive beam to connect their seeking carrier wave with the high voltage source in such a way their weapon blasts apart from overload—without allowing any of the voltage to flow back upon my own ray. Do you understand why they have not tried to

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ay us yet?"

"No," answered June, puzzled. "I an't see how they can channel, as ou call it, without your channeling he same forces back upon yourself."

"Well," explained Agar, catching he idea, "If you had an aerial that vas strung above two electric wires, ne bearing current and one a ground vire, and your aerial accidentally fell ver those two wires, the current vould flow along the fallen aerial rom the power bearing wire to the round wire, but wouldn't flow on lown and into your radio and smash t."

"Let's see you do it," asked June, miling a little dubiously. "Every ime wild juice came near any sensi- ive device I ever heard of, it was urned out, ground wires or no round wires, lightning arresters or reakers or what have you . . . some lways jumps over. Let's see it done he other way once. There's a power able a half mile from here. It runs the ontramin cars. Let's see you pick up juice from it and hand it to a Valudin listening beam without arc- ing your own machine—if you think you can."

"The secret of it is, the carrier wave doesn't short a ground wire, since it bears no flow. But crossing such a grounding wave gives it safety when it crosses another bearing cur- rent—see? I'll show you. There are several vision beams probing toward us, seeking some activity upon which to fire. I'll just channel them to that ontramin power cable . . . watch."

In seconds, using only carrier beams crisscrossing the cable and each other, Palan had transferred the flow of electrons from the power ca- ble to the vision beams of the Valu- din ray tanks. As his beams crossed the cable and each other as well as the vision beams seeking them, lightning crashed obediently along the ionized path he laid out for it, and there was only a faint crackle of flashback to his beam source.

June clapped her hands in delight at the trick. Using the simplest and most harmless of ray beams, he had destroyed four or five enemy ray op- erators and their apparatus in sec- onds. Her face turned to Agar, find- ing him a little open-mouthed in admiration too, it had been done so deftly. "That's *channeling!*" grinned Agar, pretending he had known about it all along.

"There is a breaker in these ma- chines in case you accidentally cross your beam on a cable like that. It throws out and saves the mechanism from harm. Why doesn't their break- er save their lives, and cut their beam before the main force reaches them?"

"Because our own beam does *not* throw its breaker, and carries the juice to theirs even after their breaker throws. That first pulse of energy which throws their breaker does not cut off the carrier waves, as they now source in our own machine. Once you see it, it is a simple thing . . ."

"You mean our carrier waves fol- low the path their carrier prepared, even after their beam has been cut

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off by their breakers, I suppose. Well, I saw it, but I'm not quite sure what happened."

Agar pointed out: "Palan didn't tell you that you cross the enemy beam with a beam of lesser intensity, so that the power flow will follow the most conductive path . . ."

"So it works; I saw it," agreed June. "But it's the first time I ever saw loose juice do what anyone expected it to."

Abruptly the beam automatically pulsing out the recorded message to deep space sputtered, and began to emit showers of tiny sparks intermittently. Palan, surprised, turned to watch it, then sprang to the black metal sides of the ancient device and pulled the main switch. As quickly as he had pulled the switch, he threw it back in, and repeated this procedure like a man sending code with a clumsy key. Then he waited, and Agar watched as his head came up, and his eyes flashed toward them, alight with hope. He left the beam operating, turned away, to scan the six vision-ray screens they had trained on the Valudin advance. Then he sprang back to the space signal they had improvised, and again pressed the switch off and on several times. As he stopped, and the beam emitted no more of the peculiar sparkling display that had attracted him, he slumped in disappointment and turned away.

"What was it?" their thoughts kept reminding him, and he answered, "It was the code of the Mervan warfleet, asking our identity. I gave it. They would not say how far away they are, of course, and I can not even guess. They asked how much time we could allow them—I said two hours from now we will be dead. Which is true enough. The old fatbags are ordering up the heavy ray equipment from their far fortresses. It is being brought on rollers. They will reach us from a safe range. Our position is hopeless. Even though we have thrown them into confusion and destroyed many of them, we are lost."

"Might not be," mused Agar, his eyes on June's, smiling, his body relaxed and his mind feeling better than it had for so long. "If those are the ships we passed where they were dogfighting the Valudin, they could have followed our trail, could be above Earth now!"

"You forget," cried Palan, orally, "we have been mindless for over a year, or is it two years or more? If they followed our trail and the ore boats, why have they only found us now?"

June took Palan's hand: "You are weak yet, Palan, sit down and calm yourself. They have been waiting and keeping out of the Valudin's sight because they could not approach Earth. The great space rays left here by the builders defend Earth from all comers. But now, we have created a distraction, and the badly trained and rotten personnel have perhaps abandoned some posts at the space-ray devices. Somehow our fleet out there must know what is go-

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ing on. If they didn't know, they could deduce from the nature of your SOS signal that you have access to cavern rays. Following your ray down from space to the surface. They knew it was safe because the Valudin would have shorted it out if they had been able to do so. They are not fools."

Palan leaned back, after glancing once more at the distant scenes where the crews of the lumbering tanks were clearing debris and melting away the rock barriers. "Neither are you a fool, Miss Tyne. I see that you are right. They are delayed only in finding an entrance through the surface Earth to the rock borings. You know, these Valudin super-minds long ago blasted shut most of the original entrances; those that weren't closed by the flows of lava caused by the sun-flare. Which was not bright, for much of the cavern system depended for air upon the change of temperature outside for the cave breathing to take place. When the temperature outside falls below that of the caverns, the air rises out of the caverns, is replaced by the cooler air flowing in. So they made the whole cavern network stuffy with bad air by destroying what was left of the breather system."

"What will they do, if that was a Mervan signal?" asked June.

"They will burn their way down with heat rays or thermite bombs or blast their way down with atomic bombs—I am not much interested in their method, but I am worried about one thing. If they have to burn a way through, as they cross the underground water-tables—down will pour a flood! And they must be following my beam down! The surface above is not a desert, hence there must be a water table above us waiting to pour down through the hole they will undoubtedly make. If we got to higher level borings, it would only mean we might rush into the path of a flood. If we stay where we are, we may still be flooded as water seeks its level. In this maze of borings, it's hard to tell what the water will do."

"Won't mean anything," assured Gates, "most water tables are in sand or water-bearing porous rock, gravel, and so on. The water would not come in any massive rush. Only way they could drown us would be to knock a hole in the bottom of the ocean, and even then, we're probably above sea-level."

June, her eyes twinkling in a grim humor, said: "It might be a good idea to let in a little ocean as we leave, if the fleet does pull us out of this. They are nothing but a menace, the whole lot of them here. What good would they ever do the surface of Earth if we let them live? The poor slaves would bless us as they drowned, if they had minds enough to know what was happening?

"Once I would have recoiled in horror at the idea of drowning the huge number of innocents who must also inhabit these caves along with the monstrous things the ancient Valudin have become. But how else to free Earth of them? Their fastnesses are well nigh invulnerable—even our

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fleet, if at full strength, could not approach Earth if the space-ray forts were all manned. And Earth can have no future while they are in the saddle. To rid Earth of its worst enemies, you have to cleanse the caverns of these parasites. How else to do it than by completely flooding the whole system? Our fleet has no equipment for a general war of this style, in an unfamiliar environment, against weapons built by the Master race . . . we have weapons, yes, but quite possibly nothing that would defeat the Elder ray itself."

THUS discussing idly what might happen, they waited nervously, for there was nothing for them to do. They could not reach the ranks of the Valudin soldiery as they now remained beyond range. No rays would come searching them out, for Palan had demonstrated that he could use any ray that neared them to send back a death charge. Just what they would have eventually done they were not to learn. For there came a rumbling roar from far overhead, and they heard rock-falls in the levels above. Their countrymen were blasting a way down through the ancient rock, along the path of their signal beam.

Palan tapped out a message on the handle of the beam switch. "Be careful for we are below you and can hear your approach. Do not drop this roof on our heads, it is heavy."

And heavy it was beyond calculation, they knew. The sound itself came to them less thunderously now, and presently they saw the mighty beak of a Mervan Warhawk, the *Corneel,* filling the great tunnel from wall to wall, inching along toward their position. It was a mile or so away. They did not wait, but left Teonie's "house of delight" and made for the Mervan craft in an *onplan,* one of the antique motor-sleds, a platform that slid along the smooth rock surfaces on metal runners which were inherently repellent, presented a slippery surface to all matter, the motor driving them by means of a wheel that was itself the rotor of a gravity motor.

As they left the antique device (still self-powered by the same Thyron batteries which had been placed in it before the memory of surface man), Agar tipped it over out of insatiable curiosity to get one glance at its power plant but learned nothing. They scrambled up a metal link ladder lowered from the side of the Mervan ship. As they were met at the circular lock door by an officer, Palan bellowed: "To the surface, there is no need to fight this gang on their own level! Get above these ancient pits of filth, and with your penetrays pick a spot where the cavern roofs are near the ocean floor. Then let the ocean in upon them, and forget them."

The officer frowned at Palan's informal and surprising behavior, murmured in a mild, reproving voice: "Sir, if you have suggestions to make, you will be given opportunity later, through the proper channels . . ."

Palan only roared louder, and the man's face grew red with embarrassment, the crew in the corridors

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stopped and peered and smiled or called—Ra Ahvanyi! Hail!"

"There's no time for formality, man, this is war! The enemy is bringing up heavy stationary ray, of the most massive type manufactured by the ancient Menti, the master builders! We have nothing aboard that can reach those rays if they go into action! Get aloft and bomb holes into their sea roof, or die! There is no choice, and your life hangs upon the speed with which you execute the maneuver!"

The officer, perhaps convinced, perhaps only to get away from the embarrassment, turned and began to trot forward along the companionway. But Palan raced after him, passed him. His companions, wanting to help if possible, also passed the trotting officer, who began to put forth his best efforts as June breezed past him, her hair flying, her near naked graceful body beautiful as a running deer. But he brought up last as they scrambled up the twisting metal stair into the bridge chamber in the bow.

They could hear Palan shouting. "Thank God, it's a man whom I know! Gran Tenoni, listen! I have no time to explain, but I have spent near two years in this hell-hole and I know what I'm talking about. Blast back immediately through the hole by which you entered, and start the same procedure but through the nearest ocean floor. Your only chance even to escape from these creatures is by letting in the sea upon them!"

The Captain, who knew Ahvanyi, though not well, tugged at his beard, eyeing the younger man doubtfully. "It sounds like good tactics, but my dear mother's aunt would not like the thought of such a slaughter. And afterward, some quiet night one of the Spayderine know-it-alls would call on me, and assure me he was doing the race of mankind a favor by wiping out such bloody-minded fools as myself."

For answer Palan tore open the slave's one-piece shirt he wore. On his emaciated chest was a sword, tattoed in blue, and above it a mask, and between the mask and the sword hung a pair of scales. One look at the symbols, and the bearded Captain recoiled from Palan, in a kind of revulsion and fear. "You—one of the old Guild of Destroyers! Well, you could get me off their lists, of course. But there is my commanding officer, the Admiral, hung up above for the Mervan space ray to pick off when it gets around to it. What about him?"

"Need you communicate, man? It means the lives of your comrades, your crew, him. Unless you let in the sea, they'll have you all in a few minutes more time. I know!"

"You'll speak for me . . . of course! Ahvanyi is good enough a name for me! And your friends here, they all are of the same mind? It is really so bad a pit of evil you can condemn them all? I am a soft-hearted old man—Very well!"

He turned and gave the order to return to the surface, and in seconds they were driving up through the still smouldering hole they had

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burned down through the solid rock. Agar marveled at the amount of power such a ship could pack, to burn a hole as big as this through the bedrock of a planet . . . and sat gripping the straps of his acceleration chair, watching the smoking, glowing rocks flow past the bow-screens, blur with their speed—and suddenly felt the soar and swoop as they shot up into the atmosphere and the blinding sunlight. His eyes seemed unable to adjust to the sudden terrible light he had not seen for years, and when at last he was able to see, they were nosing down into the shallow waters of a bay. He watched the screens as the penetrative rays picked out the shadowy burrows miles beneath, and he shuddered a little as the terrible heat began to lash out from the projectors, pulsing in a ravening vibration that shook the whole ship.

The steam from the disintegrated water below fountained upward about them, and then they were at the bottom, under some hundred feet of the boiling waters, and the rock beneath the sea floor was turning molten before them. Down they went, and down the water came behind them, a solid wall of boiling vapor under pressure pushing them onward, as the rock flowed and vaporized ahead of them and mingled with the onrushing water.

Then they were through, into one of the wide highway borings, and speeding back toward their first entry way. Palan clapped the captain's shoulder, bellowed above the terrible racket behind them as the sea smashed along the cavern way. "That was the best piece of work a Mervan ship has done for twenty centuries! Your name will go down in history for freeing a world of slaves from the most murderous masters the race of man has produced. Those were the creatures who have been destroying whole solar systems secretly!"

"I know," the captain's face was grim and unsmiling. "I only hope I never wake in the night to face the thought of the death of the innocents that also dwell in those ancient halls."

"Nearly all have been mentally mutilated, the Valudin custom of keeping their slaves incapable of resentment. The rest are degenerate descendants of a system beyond any other that I have ever heard of. And I have seen the ancient Spayderine libraries of evil, which run the whole galaxy through the ugly lens of honest evaluation. They have collected through the ages a spectrum of evil wider than mind can accept, yet it is true! This will take a place in the records among the vilest, this Den of the Nobles of the Valudin United Kingdoms."

"Nevertheless, if there had been some way of battling the leaders on even terms, you would never have persuaded me to destroy the helpless personnel of their planet-wide slave-trap. I am a sinner myself, Sir Ahvanyi, and I have no particular resentment against the daughters of joy, however vile their masters may be. I only hope you were not wrong in your decision. If it was not written

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into the Articles of War that an agent of the ancient order you represent was equal in authority to the Commander of a squadron . . . according to the Articles, Palan Ahvanyi commands this ship the minute he steps aboard."

"For the sake of the many nations under the thumb of those creatures, it is better that the comparatively few staffing those caverns should die," said Palan.

"What's done is done," murmured June. "Why debate about the thing now? Let's get out into space where we can nab the fat-boys as they are forced to get out. And while you're getting out there, I'd like to know how it is the IPC ships never report seeing the Valudin ships? They must come and go frequently. How do they avoid detection?"

"You forget the long range sensitivity of the Menti telaug equipment. They detect the IPC craft long before they can be detected. You can't catch a rabbit with a thirty-mile hearing, and you can't catch a Valudin slave ship equipped with a five hundred mile sensory field. The IPC have reported to their Earth staff the incidence of strange objects detected on their radar equipment, but they never got close enough to know what they were. They called them ghost ships . . . didn't they?"

"There was often press mention of ghost ships detected on radar, yes," admitted June.

Meanwhile the Captain contacted his squadron. The Commander accepted his report that the cavern system was flooding and to expect a sortie of Valudin battle craft.

"How many ships in your squadron?" asked Palan, as the Captain cut off the beam to the Commander.

"Not enough for the job we're going to have if we let them get aloft. There are only fifty of us. Twenty of those are beyond the moon, keeping its bulk between them and possible long range attack from the caverns."

"You have spent the last two years on the moon?" asked June, unbelieving the persistence of the Mervan Commander.

"Orders were to trace Ahvanyi and the ore ships. Our sun almost flared, but it was damped in time. Our climate is ruined. There will be short rations for several years as many fruit trees were destroyed by the heat wave and the cold wave that followed the damping operations. But the sun-smiths are at work, gently coaxing our sun back to normal again. The Unicourt is raving at us with edict after edict, orders and official communications of all kinds are exchanged daily between our new independent Court set up among all the dissatisfied nations formerly adhering to Unicourt." The captain grinned at Ahvanyi "The Mervan-sponsored Independent Court now numbers over ten thousand members, and the minimum requirements for a full membership are two planets of at least 100,000,000 population. We outnumber the Unicourt and they are going crazy trying to bluff us back into line."

Agar caught Palan's puzzled eyes.

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"I suggest it might be smart for us to high-tail out of here, we can do the fat-backs of Earth's secret clique more harm by presenting our evidence to both the Unicourt and the Mervan Independent group. They'll have the power to bring them in, and we'll only get these men destroyed and ourselves, too, trying to stop them from escaping the flooded caverns . . . or would we?"

"With fifty fighting Mervan first line battle craft we can bottle them up in their caverns. There aren't fifty openings to the surface in operation. We can form a connected grid around the Earth with fifty ships, and spot every craft as it comes out, blast it back to Earth. They can't escape us, if we get into action. They won't come out at once. They will get back to their space-ray and try to knock us out of the sky. I say hightail out of here, then come back in a few hours after they have decided they can't save the caverns. Just in time to catch them as they emerge, and just absent long enough to be out of range of the ultra-powerful fortress rays they are turning on us right now. Begin evasive action, Captain, I see . . ."

So did they all see the lance of flickering blue power that hissed across their bows. The *Corneel* went into a corkscrew flight pattern, spiraling in an irregular turn, and within minutes several more of the huge ancient rays from beneath the surface of the Earth, now itself a visibly round ball beneath them, growing smaller, began to fire. The space about them became filled with the diffuse beam from a fan focus designed to short out their electrical control devices and instruments—and succeeding. Their jets thrummed on unharmed, as they were fired by an automatic pressure release controlled solely by the build up of pressure against a valve. But their lights went out, the navigation dials fell to zero, the view screens went blank, and they proceeded blindly upward, being only sure that the Earth was below them.

QUIETLY the Captain ordered: "Go into high speed vortex drive," and the sound of the jets died away, to be replaced by the quiet hum of the over-drive.

"They can't short a vortex. It isn't electrical in nature," Agar explained to June, remembering his sleep lessons.

"And how do they produce a vortex?" asked June.

"It's done by exposing a certain super-heavy metal to the action of terrific mechanical stress. In space, in the absence of gravity, this stress forms a strain point where the lines of ether-flow force are bent and thus form a circular flow pattern, with an ether-vacuum at the center. The ship is drawn into this space-vacuum which is formed just ahead of the ship.

"Sounds impossible," commented June, "just bend some metal and the ship falls in a hole in space."

"It is impossible on the surface of a planet. That's why we have jets. But out in space, matter partakes of new

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properties, strange new things are true. You know the law—any action brings forth an equal and opposite reaction. . . Well, the action in bending this particular metal brings out a reaction in the ether flow passing through it. On Earth this would be unnoticeable. In space, the ether-flow is all-important, all-pervasive and when you start a reaction in it, you get eddies, whirlpools—what we call a vortex. Ether, you know, is made up of the ultimate particles, what is left when suns get through burning up—the ash of ashes, as it were. When you start a vortex in this stuff rushing away from the sun, rushing along at speeds beyond imagination . . . you really get a ring-around-the-rosy that means business. It's how they built their planets, you know, really it's how all planets are formed, within the center of the huger vortices of space."

"Like you stick your finger in a brook, and you get a little whirlpool?" asked June.

"That's it. This drive is powered by the simple act of impeding the flow of the ash of energy, impossible as it seems."

"And a little matter begins to form in every vortex?"

"That's right . . ."

"What happened to the big guns from below? They were about to blast us down . . ."

"When you go into vortice drive, you travel faster than a ray-man's eye can follow with his ray . . ."

Palan entered the conversation: "So we circle the earth at this terrific speed, until our instruments tell us they are leaving the surface. Then we drop back into jet drive and go for them before they get away from gravity. We will have every advantage, and should stop them."

"I still can't see how bending a metal bar will drive a ship!" grumbled June, trying to see something in the view-screens over Palan's shoulders, but not succeeding as there was nothing to be seen but a gray blur of motion.

"Remember when they first tried to tell you how a jet operated?" asked Agar, smiling at the feminine blockheadedness she was displaying, unusual in her, but only proving to him she was very much a woman.

"Yes, and don't look so smug! You asked the same question, I can bet. 'What does the jet push against?'"

"It's just reaction in its simplest form, a jet. So is the vortex drive, reaction in a simple form. The activator is not an expanding gas, but a mechanical distortion of the peculiarly aligned atoms in a metal bar. These particular metals used have an affinity for the sub-atoms of ether flow. When they are bent, the force lines of their flow about the bar are bent, too, and their high speed does the rest, forms the block about which the flow spins in a vortex. It's really a simple device . . ."

"It's too simple, I've got to see it before I believe it."

"What does a jet push against" mocked Agar, and June pouted prettily.

"The device itself is not so simple

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to examine." Palan again cut in, though they knew that half his mind was watching certain dials which would flicker in betraying movement as soon as any object created a vortical strain in space by rapid motion. They could see these dials flicker back and forth intermittently, and knew they were describing the passing of another Mervan craft somewhere nearby. "The bending of the bar is only a kind of catalyst for the beginning of a vortex. The rotation is coaxed a bit with the injection of —in your world, it would be called a cyclotron but it is not the same thing. A vortex once formed, builds itself up by utilizing the terrific flow of the sub-particles. If this were not true, the drive would not function. A vortex in space is somewhat like a funnel in a windstorm, caused by the coming together of two currents at an angle tangential to each other's force. What the device does is coax one part of the ether flow into an angle with the main flow, and the funnel builds up from there . . ."

"It seems to me there must exist cross flows in the ether flow itself, then." Agar was himself trying to puzzle out the principle.

"Exactly, there you have it. Ether not a unidirectional flow, but is made up of particles emitted by the infinite number of suns in space, criss-crossing in direction the emissions from other suns.

"I begin to grasp the principle." June was enthusiastic. "You borrow energy from suns a million light years way-- all those lines of force criss-cross in crazy network until you set a few spinning about a common center, then the others keep joining in and pushing . . . you'd think though, there'd be so many different directions at work they'd neutralize each other."

"There are always one or two main flows from nearby suns, and the other flows are impinged upon this main flow to cause the funnel action . . ." Palan, talking with his attention elsewhere, suddenly shouted: "There she comes! The line on that screen says a ship is blasting off from Earth! Captain, ask your Commander to detail a ship to the source of that line of flight and to stop any others from ascending from the same opening. And ask him if we shall go after that one?"

"Do you think I'm a blind man, Ahvanyi? He's already signaled detection, and there's the line of flight of the Mervan ship descending to block off that exit. I've sent for orders, we'll get them in an instant—there it is! That green dot on the center screen means it's our pigeon. Let's go . . ."

"You naval-trained men are too slick for me," grunted Palan, "I'm just a thought behind your prepared habitual responses. Man, is it safe to head for Earth at this speed so close?

"Safer to go down fast than slow, Ahvanyi, as you'd know if you'd finished a proper pilot's course instead of signing up with . . . never mind, every man to his calling. The faster you go down, the more V. you've got to go up again, or to slip past the planet under you. That fat-boy you want won't have the velocity to go up

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as fast as we will on his tail—we'll be passing him in just three minutes. Time it . . ."

Followed sixty minutes of concentrated action as Mervan ships plunged down upon each Valudin as they emerged from their impregnable hiding place—which had suddenly become a water-trap. The Valudin craft shot crazily upward, in wild zig-zags to elude the fire of the diving Mervan warriors, and usually did manage to evade most of the fire directed toward them. But they could not escape. The craft diving from an original velocity given them by the vortex drive above the atmosphere, flamed into white-hot glowing permalloy hulls, like vengeful suns pursuing those who had sabotaged the suns so long. As the Valudin saw the reckless velocity heating their pursuers white-hot as they struck the stratosphere, the nerve seemed to go out of them. As the Mervan craft came alongside, glowing and blasting their forward jets in showers of fire to match the slower velocity of the pursued, the fire of the Valudin batteries smothered by wide fans of neutralizing energy screens, instead of attempting to evade the magnetic grapples thrown toward the hulls, the Valudin seemed to wait! To Gates Agar's eyes they gave up in a blue funk when the issue of fight-to-the-death or surrender was put to them. One or two, perhaps knowing there was no other possible way to escape eventual death, did fight it out as the Mervan Hawkboats overhauled them at the upper limits of atmosphere. They went into a tight circle, firing steadily, and the bright blue and orange ray beams crossed and flashed upon the shorting defensive screens. Showers of fiery stars flew as the terrific energies were neutralized by opposed flows—and the pursuer and pursued wheeled tightly about each other, in a display of colored fiery fountains, shot through with the plunging yellow sparkling bits of metal as the dense metal of the hulls melted and gave way, flinging off its harder case in tiny fragments of fire as the inner softer core melted and flowed.

But the Mervan craft were built by masters too, perhaps as great as those who had constructed the ancient craft still used by the renegade Valudin lords, and the battle was equal when but two ships locked rays. But high overhead circled the grid of evenly spaced Mervan Warhawks, waiting—and when a Valudin escapee proved about to win through to space, they dived upon him two at once, blasting the ship apart with dual rays bearing down upon the rear jet tubes, where the most vulnerable area of these craft lay. Inside the rear assembly was housed the fissionable materials used for the jets, and the shock and vibration and heat of the massed fire of two of the powerful Mervan ships at once would set the fissionable material into increased activity—the tubes would fuse and blaze and the whole rear would take on a white hot glow as the drive melted down into useless junk.

Some two hundred or more of the

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Valudin ships dodged skyward, and were blasted down or surrendered, before the battle ended. It was a display of crafty tactics and bold utilization of the terrific velocities of which these space craft were capable. For June and Gates it was proof enough that the Mervani were far from soft and that the Valudin were indeed degenerate and cowardly. For with good timing and courageous sacrifice, a good half of the Valudin craft could have battled through the Mervan blockade to safety, for they outnumbered the Mervan ships four to one. But there was in them the panic of the rising waters behind, the terrible pressuring waters coming up irresistibly, the deeps of ocean itself pumping the water through those ancient rock tubes with hydraulic force crushing all temporary barricades erected. They could not await orders—if they received any sane orders—to time their emergence simultaneously, but came out by twos and threes, raggedly, minutes apart, so that they were forced to run the gantlet without support from their fellows.

It was a fine example of discipline and courage from the Mervan command, and a rank display of panic and stupidity from the tyrants who had holed in those caves so long they had forgotten what real battle required of a man.

IT was hours later when the last of the attempts to leave Earth was frustrated by the waiting Mervan Hawkboats. Then the Commander detailed five ships to investigate each opening revealed to them by the ships' emergence, to make certain no resistance remained hidden within, above the rising flood, then turned the rest of their prows toward the emerald sun of Mervan.

Sweeping over the tired old Earth, Agar and June Tyne watched the penetrative rays of the Mervan pilots reveal the water-filled tubes beneath, the thousands of bodies carried up and crushed against the tunnel roofs.

For the most part the vast system of caverns carved from the rocks of Earth as a last retreat against an enraged sun so long ago were now filled with the terrific water pressure of the ocean's deeps, for they had for the most part been far beneath the ocean's level. Strangely, in those portions above ocean level, they saw an ugly phenomenon. The rising waters had forced the air into the tubes above ocean level with accumulating pressure. If the Valudin had left the original openings as they had been constructed, this air pressure would not have been destructive. But the great domes of caverns within the mountains contained now only lifeless bodies, as the terrific air pressure had killed as surely as the flood.

Palan sighed, as they completed the survey, after circling earth seventeen times. Their long range penetray, had given them a view of every portion of the caverns still used by the Valudin.

"If there still remain some alive within those tubes, I doubt they will

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ever get out," he murmured, and Agar gave him a whack on the shoulder.

"When we get back to Earth," he grinned, attempting to bring Palan out of the gloomy mood induced by the sight of so much death, "we will have the surface governments re-explore the caverns, open those mountain domes, let out the high-pressure air. If we find any of the fat-bottomed old Valudin still alive, we will know what to do with them."

"So you expect to return to Earth? You know how short the life span is, under Earth conditions?" asked Palan, surprised.

"It will get longer, when we organize a little real medical work. . ." put in June. "Do you think we should abandon our own people?"

"No, I didn't mean that! I must take thought . . ." and what Palan meant they did not learn till much later.

DURING the long voyage back to Mervan, Palan and his two Spayderine survivors processed the captured crews and "Lords" of the Valudin clique. There were several thousand captives taken from some forty ships that surrendered. When they finished, the Spayderine technique had extracted mental and oral records that would damn the Valudin ruling clique through all eternity.

Palan busied himself preparing an orderly presentation of this mass of evidence, even taking statements from June Tyne and Gates Agar to add to the records. The playback was certain to set all civilized space forever against the Valudin domination.

"I hope the same edict of ostracism against the whole nation won't take place. . ." June was seriously regarding Palan. "Can't you suggest, in court, that a purge of those truly responsible take place, and not call down upon the lesser people the everlasting doom that sterilized Earth for so long? Don't let happen to them what happened to Earth, however just it may seem."

Palan shook his head. "Those ancient unjust edicts were motivated by the Valudin's leader's greed for the caverns and mighty weapons of the Elder Menti race they slaughtered. Similar edicts since then were sponsored and forced through the Unicourt by the Valudin satellites, over-riding all objections by their use of intimidation of lesser countries. It will not happen again. The Valudin lower classes will not be punished for the deviltry their nobles got into, and neither will the whole noble class be singled out for punishment. No one will be punished except those actually engaged in sun-sabotage. That is the crime, and the punishment will be death."

IT was some years later, long after the galaxy-wide excitement of the duplicate trial and conviction of the surviving Valudin overlords by both the Unicourt and the Independent Mervan court had ended in a mass execution of some five thousand wealthy plutocrats long considered

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immune from criminal action. June Tyne and Gates Agar had completed the five year period required by Mervan law for a marriage to become legally valid. As their wedding present, they were overwhelmed to receive from the two great courts (now functioning as "the Lower" and "the Higher Court") a document, sealed with the great seal of the Unicourt, beside which burned the emerald glow of the Mervan seal.

Upon opening the impressive roll of parchment, and perusing with difficulty the wordy phrases set in five different kinds of type, the five separate tongues needed for all documents of so wide an application—they finally deduced that what they held was an appointment of themselves as two ambassadors to Tellus, under Sol IX. As they examined the document, the powers it gave them were formidable, and they looked at each aghast. It gave them the warfleets of some ten thousand great nations of space, if need be, to back up their negotiations with the governments of Earth—negotiations which "must" "result in peace" and "understanding between" the nations of Earth and the nations of the "combined areas of Rurgen, Valudin, Mervan, etc. etc."—pages of it, all of which came to a downright command to Earth rulers to settle down or else. And it left a great deal of the decision for the "or else" part up to their two ambassadors. If they didn't like what went on on Earth, they could call down upon Earth the whole might of space to settle things.

"We're practically rulers of all Earth, with this thing in our hands!" breathed June, her eyes starry, her lips parted in unbelief.

"I wonder if they realize that the people of Earth do not even know the great nations of space exist . . ." mused Agar, still puzzled and unbelieving.

"You dope, when we land openly in a Unicourt warship, one of those mile-long things they use for official business, to make an impression . . . Earth will be afraid to open their lips. They'll take it and like it. It'll be good for them."

"I don't know. I hope they accept this thing. I know it's meant well, and they won't really translate the five tongues it's written in very accurately, for a long time. They'll accept all right, for a while. But we'll have to work fast to make ourselves popular. Else we'll have plenty of trouble."

"Later, perhaps. We'll have time to get ready, time to organize . . . but why, Gates, did they pick us? Just because we're from Earth doesn't seem reason enough to hand out a job of this magnitude?"

"Palan probably gave us a lot of the credit for stopping the Valudin mob. That swung the deal our way. He handled the whole case, the presentation, the prosecution . . . and there were Ahvanyi's in the central committee of judgment. Who knows, for sure? Don't you think we deserve the job?"

"Oh, darling, of course we can try.

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But it seems like such a big job."

"More apt to bring it off than some over educated alien mind who could never understand Earth's politics if he lived there for a century. They almost have to use us! Who else have they got?"

"Truth is," sighed June, sleepily, "they don't consider Earth very important, and it isn't, yet. It is really their way of righting the ancient wrong done to our solar system when they isolated us. Our job is to make our people understand it's a great privilege, and not an imposition by a foreign government. That is the point."

Agar smiled, and murmured. "Right now we're officially married, after five years of looking each other over, according to Mervan law. Does it feel any different to be married?"

"I don't know," murmured June. "Kiss me and see!"

* * *

THE IPC patrol craft swarmed up to meet the huge invader from outer space. It dwarfed them as a hawk dwarfs a mosquito. But in answer to their order to identify itself and slow down for inspection, they were dumbfounded as their space-radios blared back at them in perfect English:

"This is a peaceful passenger craft bearing two citizens of Tellus, your Earth. You will give permission to land, as we bear official notification of the acceptance of Earth into the League of Nations of the Galaxy, gifts from the Empire of Varun, from the Independent States of Mervan, from the Guild of Sol-tyne, from the New Republic of Valudin . . . etc., etc. (some two hundred names of states who sought trading grants), and the Ambassadors from the highest authority in known Space, the Unicourt of the Hundred Suns."

By the time the provokingly dilatory voice had recited all this rigamarole, the mighty space liner had entered the atmosphere, and its jet tubes were roaring as it swung majestically end for end, settling slowly for a landing. The IPC officers were in a jitter. They feared to antagonize such a powerful visitor, and yet it was warping in for a landing without permission.

While the brass jittered and bellowed into useless microphones, the HQ on Long Island likewise jittered and bellowed into likewise wholly useless radiophones. A ray from the visitor kept their radio waves from traveling more than a few feet. It seemed to the gathering crowds of curious citizens that the patrol ships were calmly escorting a vast and wholly unidentified alien craft of terrifying aspect to a landing on La Guardia field. There, it settled into a vast bowl of shattered concrete as the whole field collapsed under its weight.

The block-long gangplank ran out with a thunderous sound of chains and gears, a gangplank of chrome steel, bright as new cutlery, emblazoned on the guide-rail canvas with the Arms of a dozen mighty ancient empires.

June Tyne and Gates Agar, ready,

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moved out first to the top of the gangplank, and for some reason, possibly explained by a little suggestion from the ray-operators aboard ship, the gathering mob below suddenly broke out into cheer after cheer. To June and Gates it seemed their appearance had caused the ovation, and Gates grinned at June, delightedly agreeing she was worth cheering for.

She had chosen as her costume motif the Queen of Hearts. "It's the impression we want to convey, beneficence and power, ancient wisdom and regality," she had explained, as she and the numerous high-placed ladies aboard the ship worked on her costume.

But, whatever they meant the costume to resemble, what Agar and the other susceptible males saw was a skin-tight scarlet over-all, (an over-all like no over-all since the first eye-wise dressmaker calculated the dimensions of a woman's hips) open in the front to the waist, but with a spider-web of gold lace inserted to avoid over-enthusiasm among the audience. On this perfect base, her Mervan friends had affixed ornamental gadgets and blazing jewels such as no Earth eye had ever seen. The gadgets gave her the power to read a mind at two miles or anywhere nearer, the power to see through the stonewalls about her for an equal distance, and the power to impress her own thought upon anyone in such a way they could not help but agree and act accordingly.

But nature had given her the power to knock an eye out at first sight, and the ray operators invisible in the monstrous ship were exploiting nature's gift to the utmost. The crowd went overboard for her, that is, the male part of it.

Agar was himself resplendent in a lastex scarlet uniform, with gold braid accenting the fine shoulders and slim waist and powerful legs, and likewise hung with the cunning gadgetry giving him similar powers to June's. On his broad chest blazed the emerald Star of the Order of Honor presented him by the Spayderine staff-master.

Their costumes and other-world ornaments gave them a space-going and utterly bizarre appearance. Gates bore in his hand the huge scroll of their appointment to Earth, which had been recently appended with a translation in modern English by June herself.

As they moved in stately majesty down the lengthy and glittering gangway, behind them followed the resplendently uniformed officers of the great ship, each bearing a gift, two hundred of them pacing slowly behind Gates and June. At the bottom, the crowd pressed closer about the grinding news cameras, the televisors, the upheld microphones, awaiting their first words.

The two, handsome as young Gods, paused before this array of communicators, ignoring the blazing flash bulbs. Gates bellowed out in his kindly bass:

"My people, I bring to you at last the glad tidings you have been awaiting for two thousand years. We bring peace, a new way of life . . ."

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Lost Continents

By L. Sprague de Camp

No. I

The STORY of ATLANTIS*

There was an island in the sea
That out of immortal chaos reared
Towers of topaz, trees of pearl
For maidens adored and warriors feared.

Long ago it sunk in the sea;
And now, a thousand fathoms deep,
Sea-worms above it whirl their lamps,
*Crabs on the pale mosaic creep.***

Aiken

MEN have always longed for a land of beauty and plenty, where peace and justice reigned. Failing to make one in the real world, they have often sought consolation by creating imaginary Edens, Utopias, and Golden Ages. Formerly they located these ideal commonwealths in the distant past or in undiscovered parts of the world. Now, however, that the unexplored places left on earth are few and uninviting, and the history of the remote past is fairly well known, they prefer to place their utopias in the distant future or even on other planets.

Many such dreams have been written up, and to lend extra interest to their stories the writers have sometimes pretended that their tales were literally true. This practice has had the unfortunate effect of convincing some readers (who have enough trouble distinguishing fact from fiction anyway) that such indeed was the case. For instance, when the noted sixteenth-century idealist Sir Thomas More published his famous *Utopia*—a story about an imaginary island where people led lives of simple virtue—the conscientious More was much disconcerted when one of his pious contemporaries, the learned Budé, wrote him urging that missionaries be sent to convert the Utopians to Christianity! And when G. B. McCutcheon wrote his Graustark novels, he was deluged with

*Slightly condensed from *Lost Continents: The Atlantis Theme in History, Science, & Literature*, by L. Sprague de Camp; Phila.: Prime Press, 1952; copr. 1952 by L. Sprague de Camp.

**From *Priapus and the Pool*, by Conrad Aiken, in *Selected Poems* (Scribnér's, 1929); copr. 1918-1929 by Conrad Aiken; by permission of the author.

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fan mail asking how to get to Graustark, or taking exception to the author's statements about his imaginary Balkan kingdom. None of his correspondents, evidently, thought to look at a map.

Of all these creators of imaginary worlds, the one with the widest and most lasting influence was the Greek philosopher Aristokles the son of Ariston, better known by his nickname of Plato, the inventor or historian of Atlantis. Although his Atlantis story made but little stir at the time he wrote it, it became so popular in later centuries that to this day the name "Atlantis" evokes a picture of a beautiful world with a high and colorful culture (now, alas, gone forever) in the minds of thousands of people who never heard of Plato.

Nearly two thousand books and articles have been written about Atlantis and other hypothetical continents, ranging in tone from the soberest science to the wildest fantasy. Explorers have travelled thousands of miles looking for traces of the Atlantean culture described by Plato, and geologists have devoted thousands of hours to study of the earth's crust to find out whether continents do rise and sink, and if so when and why. And many plain men to whom it is no great matter whether

> . . . a strange city lying alone
> Far down within the dim West

ever sank beneath "the dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-haunted sea" have turned their attention to Atlantis.

Recently a group of English newspapermen voted the reëmergence of Atlantis as the fourth most important news story they could imagine —five places ahead of the Second Coming of Christ. Astronomers have bestowed the name "Atlantis" (along with many others from Classical mythology) upon an area on the planet Mars. The Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution calls the little ship it explores with the *Atlantis*, and the name has served as a title for several periodicals, a theatrical company, a hotel in Miami, and several establishments (a book shop, an engineering firm, and a restaurant) in London. Finally, in 1951 the Minsky's Burlesque show at the Rialto Theatre in Chicago included an aquatic strip-act called "Atlantis, The Sea-Nymph." Evidently the Atlantis theme has a grip upon the fancy all out of proportion to its practical importance—though I wouldn't say it were entirely trivial, since the question of Atlantis does enter into the general problem of the origins of man and of civilization.

Perhaps the very impracticality of Atlantism constitutes part of its charm. It is a form of escapism that lets people play with eras and continents as a child plays with blocks.

As many people have heard vaguely of the lost-continent theories, and as many seem interested in them without ever having looked into the historical and scientific sides of the question, I will try to tell the story of the Atlantis concept and its prog-

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ny such as Mu and Lemuria. Vhere did the Atlantis story origiate? Is the tale fact, fiction, or fiion founded on fact? What is there o the various lost-continent theoies? Did Atlantis or Lemuria ever xist? If not, what then is this urious hold that the idea of lost ontinents has upon the minds of nen? I can't guarantee final anwers to all these questions, but that s the chance you take.

FIRST, to consider the story of Atlantis in its earliest known orm: About the year 355 B.C. Plato vrote two Socratic dialogues, *Timaios* and *Kritias,* wherein he set orth the basic story of Atlantis. At hat time Plato was in his seventies nd had been through a lot, including enslavement and liberation and n unsuccessful attempt to apply is theories of government at the ourt of the Tyrant of Syracuse. For many decades he had lectured t Athens, during which time he wrote a number of dialogues: little plays epresenting his old teacher Socrates nd his friends sitting around and discussing such problems as politics, morals, and semantics.

Although Socrates is the chief talker in many of these dialogues, we cannot be sure which of the ideas set forth are really those of Socrates and which those of Plato. While we find many of Plato's ideas unsympathetic today—he sneered at experimental science, glorified male homosexuality, and advocated a type of government that we should call "fascistic" or "technocratic"—he pioneered in some departments of human thought. Furthermore he wrote with such poetic charm and vivacity that he seduced many later thinkers into exaggerating his solid contributions to man's intellectual growth.

Some years previously he had written his best-known dialogue, *The Republic,* in which he gave his prescription for an ideal state. Now he undertook *Timaios* as a sequel to *The Republic,* since the same cast of characters is assembled in the house of Plato's great-uncle or distant cousin Kritias on the day following the conversation of *The Republic.*

The time is about 421 B.C., when in real life Socrates was not yet fifty and Plato a small child; and early in June, during the festival of the Lesser Panathenaia, just after that of the Bendideia. The characters are Socrates, Kritias, Timaios, and Hermokrates. Kritias, Plato's relative, was a talented historian and poet on one hand, and on the other a scoundrelly politician, a leader of the Thirty Tyrants who inflicted a reign of terror on Athens after that state had been defeated by Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. Timaios (not to be confused with the later historian of the same name) was an astronomer from Locri in Italy, while Hermokrates was an exiled Syracusan general.

Timaios was intended as the first book of a trilogy, in which, first, Timaios lectured on the creation of the world and the nature of man according to the Pythagorean philos-

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ophy; second, Kritias told the tale of the war between Atlantis and Athens; and third, Hermokrates was to have spoken on some similar subject—perhaps the military side of the Atheno-Atlantean war after Kritias had finished with the theological and political aspects. It is quite likely that Plato, a thorough militarist, should have had some such discourse in mind. However, the trilogy was never completed. Some time (perhaps years) after finishing *Timaios*, Plato began a rough draft of *Kritias*, but dropped the whole project before he had finished this piece and instead wrote his last dialogue, *The Laws*.

Timaios starts with Socrates and Timaios recalling the discourse of Socrates on the previous day; that is, the dialogue of *The Republic*. Hermokrates then says that Timaios, Kritias, and he himself are all ready to give speeches on man and the universe, especially Kritias, who has already "mentioned to us a story derived from ancient tradition."

Pressed for details, Kritias tells how, a century and a half before, the half-legendary Athenian statesman Solon heard the story in Egypt, whither he had withdrawn because of the unpopularity he had incurred by his reform of the Athenian constitution. On his return to Athens he repeated it to his brother Dropides, Kritias's great-grandfather, who in turn passed it on down to his descendants. Solon had intended to make an epic poem of the narrative, but had never found enough time off from politics to complete the work.

During his Egyptian tour Solon stopped off at Saïs, the capital of the friendly King Aahmes. (Here is a discrepancy; Solon is supposed to have made his trip between 593 and 583 B.C., whereas Aahmes II reigned from 570 to 526 B.C. But never mind that now.) Here Solon got into a discussion of ancient history with a group of priests of the goddess Neïth or Isis, whom the Greeks identified with their own wise and warlike Athena. When Solon tried to impress them by telling them some of the Greek traditions, like that of Deukalion and Pyrrha and their Flood, the oldest priest (named Sonchis, according to Plutarch) laughed at him. The Greeks were children, he said; they had no ancient history because their records had all been destroyed by the periodical catastrophes of fire and flood that overwhelmed the world—all but Egypt, which, being proof against such misfortunes, had kept records from the Creation on down.

The priest went on to tell Solon that Athena had founded a great Athenian empire 9000 years previously (that is, about 9600 B.C.) divinely organized along the lines that Plato had sketched in his *Republic*. A communistic military caste had ruled the state, and everybody was brave, handsome, and virtuous.

There had also been a mighty empire of Atlantis, centering upon an island west of the Pillars of Herakles (the Strait of Gibraltar) larger than North Africa and Asia Minor

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:ombined, and surrounded by small-
:r islands. In those days you could,
)y traversing this great archipelago
sland by island, reach the super-con-
inent, beyond Atlantis, which sur-
ounded the ocean that encircled the
nhabited world.

The Atlanteans, not satisfied with
uling their own islands and parts of
he outer "true" continent, had tried
o conquer the whole Mediterranean
egion. They had extended their
ule as far as Egypt and Tuscany
when they were defeated by the
)rave Athenians, who led the fight
gainst them and persisted in it even
fter their allies had fallen away.
Then a great earthquake and flood
devastated Athens, swallowed the
Athenian army, and caused Atlantis
to sink between the waters of the
Atlantic Ocean. Forever after the
waters west of Gibraltar were un-
navigable because of the shoals left
by the sinking of Atlantis.

Kritias then says he lay awake all night trying to remember the details of the story, since it would illustrate the theories that Socrates had propounded the previous day. In fact, he goes on: "the city with its citizens which you described to us yesterday, as it were in a fable, we will not transport hither into the realm of fact; for we will assume that the city is that ancient city of yours, and declare that the citizens you conceived are in truth those actual progenitors of ours, of whom the priest told."

Socrates is enthusiastic, especially since the account "is no invented fable but genuine history." However, Kritias prefers that Timaios deliver his discourse first. So Timaios takes up the conversation and devotes the rest of this long dialogue to Pythagorean scientific theories: the movements of the Solar System, the shape of the atoms comprising the Four Elements, the creation of mankind, and the working of the human body and soul.

IN the next dialogue, *Kritias*, Kritias resumes his narration: When the gods divided up the world, Athena and Hephaistos received Athens and set up the Athenian state on suitably Platonic lines. Not only were its workers and farmers incredibly industrious, and its "Guardians" inhumanly noble, but Greece itself, also, was larger and more fertile in those days. Another of Plato's inconsistencies is that in *Timaios* Athens (and, by implication, Atlantis) was founded 9000 years before Solon's time, while in *Kritias* it is said that "many generations" after this founding Atlantis was sunk—also 9000 years before Solon's time.

Meanwhile Poseidon the leading sea-god and also the god of earthquakes and horsemanship, had received Atlantis as his share. The population of Atlantis then consisted of a couple who had sprung from the earth, Euenor and Leukippë, and their daughter Kleito. When the old couple died, Poseidon (undeterred by the fact that he was already married to Amphitritë, one of the daughters of the other sea-god

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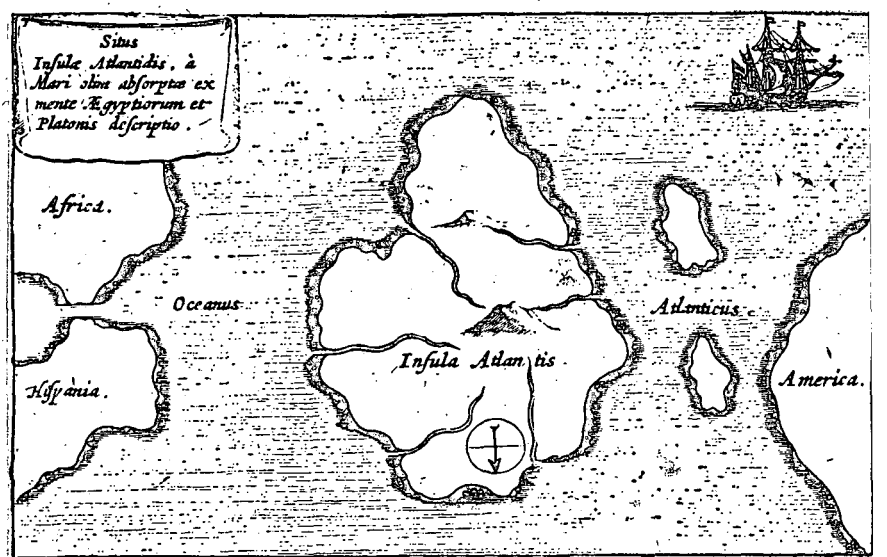

MAP OF ATLANTIS from Athanasius Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* 1644). Note that, in contrast to modern maps, north is down and south up.

Okeanos) set up housekeeping with Kleito on a hill in Atlantis. To keep his sweetheart safe he surrounded the hill with concentric rings of land and water. He also supplied the hill with hot and cold fountains from underground streams. (The Greeks had exaggerated ideas about subterranean watercourses, believing for instance that the Alpheios River in western Greece, the original of Coleridge's sacred River Alph, ducked under the Adriatic to reappear as the spring Arethusa in Sicily.)

Poseidon, a fertile fellow like all the gods, begat ten sons—five pairs of twins—upon Kleito, and when they grew up divided the land and its adjacent islands among them to rule as a confederacy of kings. The eldest of the first pair, Atlas (after whom Atlantis was named) he made the chief king over all. Atlas's brother Gadeiros (or to translate it into Greek, Eumelos, "rich in sheep" or "in fruit") received as his portion the region of Gadeira (later Gades or Cadiz) in Spain. Plato says that Solon translated the original Atlantean names into Greek to make them easier for his hearers. Somebody was evidently a poor linguist, since "Gadeira" is actually from a Phoenician word for "hedge."

Since the kings were prolific and the land rich in vegetation, minerals, and elephants, Atlantis in time be-

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came a mighty power. The kings and their descendants built the city of Atlantis on the south coast of the continent. The city took the form of a circular metropolis about 15 miles in diameter, with Kleito's ancient hill in the center. Around this hill the rings of land and water still existed (two of land and three of water) forming a circular citadel three miles in diameter. The kings built bridges connecting the land rings and tunnels big enough for ships connecting the rings of water. The city's docks were located on the outer margin of the outermost ring. A canal of enormous size ran straight through the city, connecting the harbor works with sea at the south end, and with a great rectangular irrigated plain, 230 by 340 miles in dimensions and surrounded by lofty mountains, at the north end. This plain was divided into square lots which were assigned to the leading farmers, who in turn had to furnish men for the Atlantean army—light and heavy infantry, cavalry, and chariots (thousands of years before cavalry and chariots were invented).

On the central island the kings erected a royal palace and, over the sacred spot where Poseidon had dwelt with Kleito, a temple surrounded by a golden wall. The rings of land were covered with parks, temples, barracks, race-courses, and other public facilities. These structures were all lavishly decorated with gold, silver, brass, tin, ivory, and the mysterious metal *oreichalkon* which "glowed like fire."

Note that Plato says nothing about the explosives, searchlights, or airplanes with which some imaginative modern Atlantists have credited the Atlanteans. The only ship he mentions in the trireme (or *triere*, a type of ship said to have been invented by Ameinokles of Corinth about 700 B.C.) and, except for *oreichalkon*, he described no technics not known to his own time. While orichalc (literally "mountain bronze") has not been identified beyond doubt, Classical writers like Hesiod casually mention it in a way that implies that the term was applied to some unusually good grade of bronze or brass. It might have been silver-bronze.

The kings met at alternate intervals of five and six years to consult on matters of state. They assembled in the sacred precincts of Poseidon, captured a bull with a noose, sacrificed the animal with much ceremony, and held a banquet. Afterwards they wrapped themselves in dark-blue robes, put out the embers of the sacrificial fire and, sitting about in a circle, spent the rest of the night giving judgments. The following morning these decisions were recorded on tablets of gold for the benefit of posterity.

For many centuries the Atlanteans were virtuous like the Athenians of that elder day. But in time, as the divine blood they inherited from Poseidon became more and more diluted, they suffered a moral decline. Zeus, the king of the gods, observing their wicked ambition and

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greed, decided to chastise them that they might do better in the future. (Drowning the lot seems a curious method of reforming them, however.) Therefore he called the gods together in his palace at the center of the Universe to discuss the matter, ". . . and when he had assembled them, he spake thus: . . ."

Here the dialogue ends in mid-sentence. We never do learn the details of the Atheno-Atlantean war.

NOW, what have we here? A myth that Plato made up to illustrate his philosophical ideas? A true tale of the foundering of an ancient continent, handed down via the Egyptian priesthood and Solon in the manner described? Or a real tradition subsequently embroidered by the Egyptians, or Solon, or Dropides, or Plato?

There are many possibilities. Perhaps the story was told to Solon as described, but contains no truth, having been made up by lying priests to entertain visitors. Again, some writers assert that Plato, as well as Solon, visited Egypt and talked with several priests, including one named Pateneit at Saïs—not impossible, for Plato was noted as a traveller, though there is no proof of such a visit in Plato's writings, and at the time the statement was made it was customary to credit all Greek philosophers with an Egyptian tour whether they had one or not. If Plato did make such a trip, he might have heard the story there, and, when he came to write it up, have introduced it with the tale of Solon and the priest of Neïth to lend it a superficial glamor of antiquity.

It is worth noting, however, that there is no mention by any writer before Plato of any sunken island in the Atlantic, and no evidence outside of Plato's word that Solon's unfinished epic ever existed. There is nothing either in the rather scanty remains of pre-Platonic Greek literature; nothing in any of the surviving records of Egypt, Phoenicia, Babylonia, or Sumeria, which go back many centuries before the beginnings of Greek civilization.

Of course that does not prove that no such account existed. Only a small fraction of the original Greek literature has come down to us, owing to the ravages of time and neglect, and the bigotry of early Christians like Pope Gregory I who destroyed pagan literature wholesale lest it distract the faithful from the contemplation of heaven. When books were hand-written upon awkward and easily-torn scrolls of brittle papyrus, only exceptional merit or luck enabled a work to survive more than a few centuries. The loss of important Greek works is to some extent made up for by the Greeks' habit of quoting each other with credit; but still, hundreds of books that would tell us things we should like to know are gone for good.

Certain *elements* of Plato's story, even if not the story itself, do appear before Plato's time.

For instance, Atlas himself was

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an old figure of Greek myth: a son of the Titan Iapetos (one of the snake-legged giants who attacked the gods on Olympos) and a brother of Prometheus and Epimetheus. Homer speaks of him as "crafty Atlas, who knows the depths of the whole sea, and keeps the tall pillars that hold heaven and earth asunder." Literally the poet says that Atlas "has"*(echei)* the pillars, which in Greek might mean "possesses," "has charge of," or "holds up." Later writers, assuming the last meaning to be intended, made the description more definite. Thus the poet Hesiod had Atlas supporting the heavens with his head and arms, and the Greek playwrights added the detail that Atlas was condemned by Zeus for his part in the Titans' rebellion to perform this wearisome work in the West:

Where the Hesperides their song
Attune: no mariner can thence prolong
The voyage, for, his daring bark t'impede
Neptune those hallowed bounds maintains
Where Atlas with unwearied toil sustains
The heavens' incumbent load ...

Later Classical writers rationalized this myth by making Atlas a scholar-king who founded the science of astronomy, and some Christian theologians identified him with the Biblical Enoch, the son of Cain.

By Pleionë, another daughter of Okeanos, Atlas had the seven daughters called Atlantides. (The singular, "Atlantis," means "daughter of Atlas.") These, Alkyonë, Meropë, Kelaino, Elektra, Steropë, Taygetë, and Maia, eventually became the stars of the Pleiades. The other sea-god Poseidon begat a son Lykos on Kelaino, and settled this son in the Islands of the Blest, somewhere to the West. Thus in the Classical version of the Atlas myth Poseidon was Atlas's son-in-law, though being immortal he could no doubt be Atlas's father (as Plato makes him) at the same time.

In any case it is pointless to expect consistency from any body of primitive myths. They are always exuberantly contradictory, even though with the rise of civilization pious scholars try to rationalize them. Furthermore, as a parallel to the Poseidon-Kleito romance, it was said that on the island of Rhodes, which was supposed to have arisen from the depths, Poseidon "became enamored of Halia, the sister of the Telchines, and lying with her he begat six male children and one daughter, called Rhodos, after whom the island was named."

Subsequently Herakles, in the course of his Labors, induced Atlas to fetch him the Golden Apples of the Hesperides (also in the West) in return for relieving him of his burden. Returning with the apples, Atlas did not want to resume his task, but Herackles tricked him into doing so by persuading him to support the

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sky long enough for Herakles to put a pad over his head, and then decamping with the fruit. Finally Perseus turned the poor giant to stone by showing him the Gorgon's head, and thus Mount Atlas originated.

It does not follow that all these elements in the Atlas myth are equally old. In fact, there is reason to think that the idea of Atlas's having charge of the heaven-supporting pillars—a sort of divine building-and-grounds superintendent—existed in Greece centuries before the Greeks had any clear notion of the geography of the Western Mediterranean. Locating him in the West and identifying him with a real mountain were probably afterthoughts.

The rivalry of Poseidon and Athena, which in Plato takes the form of the Atlanto-Athenian war, also goes back a long way. In the standard body of Greek myth, both Athena and Poseidon claimed Athens. The sea-god asserted his claim by striking the Akropolis with his trident, causing (like Moses) a spring to flow from the spot, while Athena caused an olive-tree to spring up and was adjudged the winner. This divine contention was a common theme of Greek art, and we might say that Plato presented Poseidon with Atlantis as a consolation-prize.

IN addition to the mythological antecedents of Plato's story, various Classical writers from Herodotos on down describe primitive tribes in northwest Africa, which they call Atlantes, Atarantes, or Atlantioi, all names like that of Atlas.

However, since they tell us that these Atlantes have no names and never dream, and that their neighbors include men with snakes for feet (like the Titans) and headless men with faces in their chests, it would seem that the authors were not writing from any first-hand knowledge. Diodoros of Sicily tells a long tale of the North African Amazons (whom he carefully distinguishes from Homer's Asiatic Amazons) who dwelt on the island Hespera in the marsh Tritonis, and their queen Myrina who conquered the neighboring Atlantioi and the latter's enemies the Gorgons. According to this voluminous but uncritical first-century historian, the Atlantioi asserted that Atlas, a son of the elder god Ouranos, named both Mount Atlas and themselves after his own name. In later times, they added, Herakles exterminated both the Gorgons and the African Amazons, and the Tritonian Marsh disappeared as a result of an earthquake.

Furthermore, Classical authors often mention islands in the Atlantic Ocean and continents beyond it. Homer began the practice by scattering islands like Aiaia and Ogygia about the seas west of Greece in more or less complete disregard of the actual geography of those parts. Later authors wrote of Atlantic islands, some highly fanciful, inhabited by people with horses' feet, or satyrs, or folk with ears so large they used them in lieu of clothes. Other such references are plainly to the

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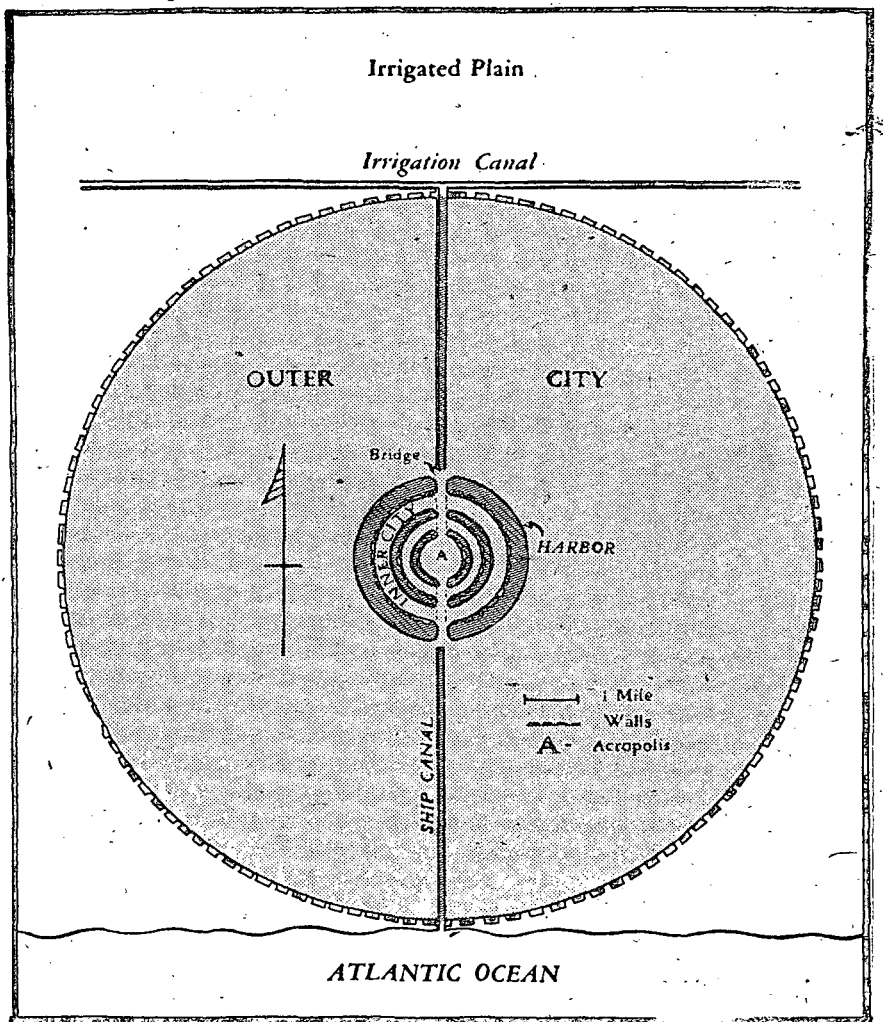

The City of Atlantis, as described in Plato's Kritras

real Canaries, Madeiras, and (possibly) Azores, generally called the Fortunate Isles. These were known to the Carthaginians, but were subsequently lost until rediscovered by Genoese explorers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

They also believed, as did Plato,

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that the ocean surrounding the known world of Europe, Asia, and Africa was in turn encircled by a great continent. The historian Theopompos, a younger contemporary of Plato, wrote of a conversation between King Midas of Phrygia (he of the Golden Touch) and the satyr Silenos. The latter described the Outer Continent as inhabited by a people twice as large and twice as long-lived as those of the known world. One section of this land, known as Anostos ("No-Return") was veiled in red mist, and drained by a River of Pleasure and a River of Grief. Once a warlike tribe of these giants crossed the ocean to invade the civilized world, but when they got to the land of the Hyperboreans and found that the latter had nothing worth stealing, they concluded that it was useless to go further and returned home in disgust.

A similar Iranian legend made Zoroaster the descendant of such invaders from the Outer Continent, and perhaps both stories are late versions, much modified, of a much older migration-legend now lost forever in its original form.

Finally, the Greeks were familiar with the general concept of the emergence of lands from the sea and their sinking back into it. Myths told of the Island of Rhodes rising out of the sea. Herodotos on his Egyptian tour noticed fossil sea-shells in the hills, and, in the earliest geological observation on record, correctly inferred that the country must once have been under water. Furthermore it was generally held that Sicily had been torn loose from Italy by an earthquake, and that the Strait of Gibraltar had been opened up by a similar convulsion of nature.

And the Greeks also cherished a whole battery of Deluge-legends, like that in which a single pair, Deukalion and Pyrrha, warned by Zeus, escape by making a box in which they floated away. This myth, like that of Noah, may be derived from an old Sumerian legend, which in turn may be based upon real floods that once overwhelmed the Euphrates Valley.

Obviously, if any intelligent man of Plato's time had wanted to write a piece of fiction like the Atlantean story, he had ample material available for his plot. Devout Atlantists take it for granted that these hints and rumors of unknown countries and people and submergences refer to a real Atlantis, any differences being due to distortion of the true historical narrative that appears in Plato's dialogues. Skeptics, on the other hand, retort that the distortion is the other way round—that Plato borrowed ideas from a number of these geographical, historical, and mythical sources and combined them to compose his fictional masterpiece.

We shall come back to this question later. Meanwhile I will merely point out that, although many of these references to Atlantes, Atlantic islands, and submergences suggest details of Plato's narrative, and might have something to do with it, not one of them says in plain language that an island named Atlantis

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once supported a civilized state but later sank beneath the Atlantic waves. Moreover the Atlas myths and the tales of the African Atlantes and the Western Islands are *known* to have existed long before Plato's mention of Atlantis.

AFTER Plato's time, however, a number of writers commented upon the Atlantis story. Although no surviving original writings mention Atlantis for over three centuries after Plato's time, thereafter we begin to learn from such authors as Strabo what Plato's immediate successors thought of the tale. At first most of them either were cautiously noncommittal, or took it for granted that Atlantis was a fiction, an allegory by which Plato meant to expound his social ideals. The latter opinion is quite in keeping with what we know of Plato's character.

First, Plato's prize pupil, Aristoteles of Stagyra, grew up into a lisping, dandyfied encyclopedist who quarreled with his teacher, set up his own school (the Academy) and, with none of Plato's charm but a vastly greater grasp of fact, wrote a series of huge dry tracts on man and the universe. In these he covered nearly all the scholarly knowledge of his time and in some fields, notably biology and logic, made important additions to human knowledge. It was not Aristotle's fault that for a millenium and a half after his time most philosophers preferred quoting him as an infallible authority to using his pioneer work as a springboard to new discoveries.

Aristotle's only known remark upon his former master's Atlantis tale was in a lost work, quoted by Strabo, in which he ironically said that as Homer, for reasons of plot, had been compelled first to erect the wall of the Achaeans about their ships on the beach at Troy and then to wash it away, so in the case of Atlantis, "he who invented it also destroyed it."

A little over two centuries later the Stoic philosopher Poseidonios, friend and tutor of Cicero, was nettled by this dig. He accordingly wrote that in view of the known effects of earthquakes and erosion, it seemed to him more reasonable to say that: "it is possible that the story about the island of Atlantis is not fiction," which for him was cautious. Strabo, though he considered Poseidonios a credulous enthusiast in other respects, approved this remark about Atlantis.

Later still, in the first century of the Christian Era, Gaius Plinius Secundus, "Pliny the Elder," said that Atlantis sank "if we are to believe Plato." His contemporary Plutarch told of Solon's attempt to make an epic poem of "the history or fable of the Atlantic island," which he never lived to complete, and how Plato later tried to improve on Solon's attempt with little better success. If skeptical about the truth of the story, Plutarch at least showed a sound appreciation of its literary merit: ". . . and the reader's regret for the unfinished part is the greater, as the

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satisfaction he takes in that which is complete is extraordinary."

UP to this point most of the commentators had viewed the story with a coldly critical eye. Under the later Roman Empire critical standards, which had never been high according to modern ideas, declined still further, with the result that people like Proklos the Neoplatonist began to take the story seriously. The Neoplatonists, followers of Plotinos and Porphyrios, constituted one of the many semi-magical and semi-philosophical cults that arose in brilliant Hellenistic Alexandria, flourished under the Roman Empire, became more and more magical, and finally disappeared (partly by absorption) with the triumph of Christianity. Careful discrimination was not among their virtues.

Proklos averred that Krantor, an early follower of Plato, took the story as straight history and claimed to have confirmed it by the testimony of Egyptian priests who showed tourists columns on which the account was inscribed, though since the visitors could not read hieroglyphics they had to take their guides' word for the content of the inscriptions. Moreover, said Proklos, the geographer Marcellus (first century B.C.) told in his *Ethiopic History* of islands in the Atlantic, three large and seven small, whose people preserved traditions of Atlantis and its empire. Others such as the Neoplatonist Porphyrios and the Church Father Origen considered Plato's story an allegory to which they attributed symbolic meanings, as that the Atlantean war symbolized conflicts among the spirits that animate the universe. The Neoplatonist Iamblichos and Proklos himself, by a Herculean effort, convinced themselves that the story was "true" in the literal and the figurative senses at the same time. Classical Alexandria was a hotbed of the vice of allegorization; the Alexandrine philosopher Philo the Jew (a believer in Atlantis) and the early Church Fathers rejoiced in ascribing symbolic meanings to their sacred writings, even, absurdly enough, asserting that every passage was both literally true and allegorically significant.

Proklos did the same with Plato in his *Commentary on the Timaios*—dreadful stuff; a vast mass of meaningless mystical "interpretation." Amidst a lot of maunderings about the significance of certain shawls embroidered with pictures of the gods trouncing the giants and the Athenians butchering the barbarians, used in Athenian religious festivals, Proklos dropped the remark that Kritias had woven a myth worthy of the festival of the Lesser Panathenaia, supposed in Plato to be in progress at the time of *Timaios*.

Later a scholiast on Plato's *Republic* misunderstood this passage to state that it was the custom at the Lesser Panathenaia to embroider a shawl with pictures of the war between Athens and Atlantis. The scholiast thereby gave the unfounded impression that the tale was known

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long before Plato's time, confusing an already dark subject further. However, we cannot blame the scholiast, considering that Proklos was about the most obscure philosopher that ever put pen to papyrus.

For the most part the Church Fathers who commented upon the Atlantis story showed no more critical sense than the Neoplatonists, taking the tale at face value. Then the rise of Christianity and the decline of the Roman Empire shifted intellectual interest from the things of this world to those of the next. Interest in remote events of mundane history, including Atlantis, declined, despite the fact that for several centuries *Timaios*, having been translated into Latin by Chalcidius, was the only work of Plato with which the West was familiar.

The last comment on Atlantis, before the long night of the Age of Faith closed down upon the Western World, was that of a certain Kosmas, called Indikopleustes ("voyager-to-India") a sixth-century Egyptian monk. Having been a travelling merchant in his younger days, Kosmas, grown old and pious, undertook to refute pagan geographical ideas in a treatise called *Christian Topography*. Into this "monument of unconscious humor" he dragged the Atlantis tale as part of a strenuous effort to prove the earth not round, as the Greeks claimed, but flat.

Kosmas maintained that the Universe was shaped (as the ancient Egyptians thought) like the inside of a box, the Hebrew tabernacle built under the direction of Moses being a model thereof. Our "earth" was an island on the floor of this container, surrounded by the Ocean, which in turn was encompassed by a rectangular strip of land where the walls of the box came down to join the floor. Paradise (later a standard fixture on medieval European maps) lay in the eastern part of this outer land, wherein men dwelt before the Flood. As for Atlantis, Kosmas affirmed that it was merely a garbled version of the Biblical Flood story which Timaios had picked up from the Chaldeans and fictionized to suit himself.

After Kosmas, Atlantis would seem to have sunk for the second time, since, save for a brief mention in the medieval encyclopedia *De Imagine Mundi* by Honorius of Autun (about 1100) nothing more is heard of it for many centuries. Still, the cult was not dead, merely dormant. When Europeans burst the intellectual bonds of the Church and the geographical bonds of their little peninsula, interest in far places and remote times would revive, and Atlantis would rise again into the consciousness of men.

End of Chapter I

In the next issue we bring you

CHAPTER II

THE RESURGENCE OF ATLANTIS

November, 1952 On Sale October 3

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LAST

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MINUTE

By J. P. Caravan

How do you stop a perpetual motion machine? John had stolen the diamonds that had gone into its making — and he had to return them.

ONCE upon a time there lived a young student whose name was John. He was a genius, but nobody knew it because he never did his homework. Like all geniuses, John was absent-minded and somewhat impractical, so when he saw a large heap of diamonds on the old professor's desk one day, he scooped them up without thinking and used them for decorations on a machine which he was building.

This was a mistake, for the machine was a perpetual motion machine, and it worked.

"Ha!" screamed the old professor, who hated John, "Ha! Now you have done it. Now I will have you expelled and imprisoned for sure. You have used up the school's research fund for the next ninety-eight point six years. You have bankrupted the science department and you have not done the assigned homework. You have married my daughter and you have made me your deadly enemy."

Now this was not quite fair, for John had not used the diamonds on purpose, and he would have done the homework if he had remembered it, and there was no reason why he shouldn't have married the professor's daughter, for he loved her and she loved him, and the professor was a deadly enemy to everybody.

"You are an evil man," said John, and this was true. The professor was a little man, the size and shape of a barrel full of beetles, and he would have looked like a furious frog if his ears had been smaller. He taught science at the old and famous university which John attended. He always had egg stains on his collar and sometimes he had them in his hair. He was a very old and evil scholar, and he hated John just as hard as he could hate, for John had indeed married his daughter, and it is a great presumption for a student who never does his homework to marry a professor's daughter, especially if this daughter is the most beautiful girl ever to be seen on the campus, or anywhere else, for that matter. Evil old professors always have beautiful young daughters: this is a law of nature.

The day John and his daughter were married, he came over to them and smiled his most smoothly smirking smile and said, "Bless you, my children. I will have you ex-

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pelled as soon as possible. Goodbye."

And now his chance had come.

John stood helplessly in the laboratory and looked down at his whirling perpetual motion machine. The diamonds glittered as they spun by. The professor dashed from the room as fast as his spindly legs would carry him. John didn't know what to do. He was still watching his machine when the professor came back with the dean of men and the president of the college and the board of trustees and the governor of the state and the warden of a nearby prison, and a dark and dirty prison it was, full of dungeons and dank dampness and despair.

"That's him!" cried the professor, for he was a scientist and not a grammarian. "Expel him and arrest him and take him away. He has used a billion dollars worth of the school's diamonds in his perpetual motion machine." And he danced up and down in an evil little jig.

"Wait," said the president of the college, for like everyone else, he hated the evil old professor and liked John, "Allow me three seconds to think. Please stop dancing."

So the evil old professor stopped dancing and the college president thought for three seconds, and he was a smart man, for he came up with the solution. "John," he said, "It is simple. Stop your machine and take out the diamonds and give them back. We will not have to arrest you and expel you and take you away. It is true, you have invented a perpetual motion machine instead of doing your regularly assigned homework, but we will permit you to scrub the blackboards for a week and thus expiate your delinquency."

"Huh?" said the board of trustees, none of whom had ever finished high school. "Whatever it is, we're for it," for they hated the evil old professor, too; and this was the first time in ninety-eight point six years that the board of trustees had agreed with the president of the old and famous university.

"But you must give back every one of the diamonds," cried the warden, "or I will have to throw you in my darkest dungeon until you die, and the rats eat you."

"But John," said the governor of the state, "what's the matter?" for he saw John leaning unhappily on one of the laboratory tables. "Why don't you stop the machine and take out the diamonds?"

Now the evil old professor shrieked a shriek that shattered two window panes, and he leaped into the middle of the laboratory and spun around happily on one toe and did three back-flips. "Ha!" he screamed. "He can't stop the machine and take out the diamonds and give them back, for it is a perpetual motion machine and it will never stop until the end of time, never ever ever." And he leaped to the blackboard and gave a lecture on the nature of time and the fourth dimension and many other interest-

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ing things.

"Who is this Entropy?" said the trustees to each other. "Does he play football? What is the Brownian Movement? Is it good or bad? How about Molecular Motion? Is it anything like Backfield in Motion?" And they nodded their heads as if they understood.

"Take him away!" screamed the professor. "Place him in your slimiest cell and let the rats eat him, for he can never get back the diamonds until the end of time."

"Couldn't you wait?" asked John.

"Away with him!" cried the professor.

"Does he play football?" asked the trustees.

"No."

"Away with him," they cried.

"Does he vote yet?" asked the governor.

"No."

"Away with him!"

"Does he have an A average?" asked the dean of men.

"He doesn't even do his homework."

"Away with him!"

"Can he do card tricks?" asked the warden.

"No."

"Away with him!" and his eyes began to glitter and he crept toward John, softly, like a cat, and he took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"Wait!" cried John. "I can get them! I'll build myself a time machine and go to the end of time when the whirling will have stopped and I'll bring back the diamonds." The warden fell back and put away his handcuffs, for this simple solution had not occurred to him.

"I will give you three days," he said. "If you do not have the diamonds by the end of three days I will throw you into my deepest dungeon and let the rats nibble away your ears."

"Agreed," said John.

"Ha!" screamed the evil old professor. "John, you are lost, for a time machine is an impossibility. To have motion you must have both time and distance, for without distance you can have no place to move to, and without time you can have no rate of motion, no speed." He grinned horribly. "Time is motion and motion is time and that is all you know and all you need to know. Ha! There will be no motion at the end of time. You will be trapped immovably once you arrive. Not a molecule will stir." And he laughed, and his laughter was like the sound of bones breaking.

John leaned against a desk, looking down sadly at his whirling perpetual motion machine. "I know an impossibility when I see one," he said. "Take me away, for I cannot build a time machine, but first let me say goodbye to my wife."

The warden wiped a tear from the corner of his eye, for he was a good man at heart. "I have given you three days," he said, "and I never go back on my word. You may try everything you can think of for three days, but I do not think you

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will succeed. I suggest you learn some card tricks to while away the long, long hours you will spend in prison. Good bye, John." And he went away.

John looked down at his invention. He couldn't get out the diamonds while it was moving, and it would move until the end of time. He couldn't break it, because it was built strongly enough to last forever, and he couldn't dissolve it in the professor's universal solvent, because that would dissolve the diamonds, too. There was no way. It would run and run while he was in jail and the rats would eat him.

"John," shouted the professor, "You are beaten. Go home to your wife and tell her she will starve in the streets and the snow because I will not ask her into my house again." And he leaped up and down in his evil joy and flung a flask full of molten tungsten at a little bird which was hopping along the window sill outside the laboratory, but he missed it. "Tell her to teach you card tricks!" he cried.

So John went home and asked his wife to teach him some card tricks, but she didn't know any.

"Don't feel badly about it," John said. "I don't really need to know any card tricks. I don't suppose I'll have to spend over seventy years in the cruel, cold, clammy dungeon, anyway. I can get a pet rat and teach him to beg for my crusts. The time will fly, and I'll soon be dead."

Now, John's wife was not a stupid girl. In fact, she was a genius, too; and when she heard him talking in this manner, she realized that something was wrong.

"Is something wrong, John?" she asked, and he told her what was wrong.

"Oh, my," she said, and John agreed.

The machine would not stop until the end of time.

It was rugged.

But on the third day, as the warden approached John with a pair of handcuffs, and as the professor was bouncing up and down for joy and celebrating with great swallows of hydrofluoric acid, and as the trustees were out scouting for a new football team, John reached into his pocket. "Wait," he said, and with a great gesture he emptied it on the desk.

The warden looked. The professor looked. John looked.

On the desk, blinking in the afternoon sunlight, lay two trout flies, a marble, a set of keys, three postage stamps, half an orange, a hemisected earthworm (Lumbricus Terrestrius), a dozen test tubes, an answer sheet for next week's examination, and a lettuce and tomato sandwich. There was also a deck of cards.

"Fiddle-dee-dee," said John. "Wrong pocket." He reached into the other one and pulled out a handful of diamonds. "Here," he said. "They're all here."

"It's a cheat!" screamed the professor. "That machine would never stop, not ever ever until the end of

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time and the rats were going to nibble on your toes in the dungeon." He leaped up and down in his rage.

"True," said John. "It was simple. I merely stopped time in the vicinity of the machine."

"No," shouted the old and evil professor. "No! No! Impossible." And he leaped up and down until the floor began to crack under the impact of his furious heels. "How? How?"

"There was no trouble at all," said John. "You told me that there was no molecular motion at the end of time."

"True, true!"

"What is the record for the high jump in this state?" asked the warden. "I think the professor is about to beat it," and this was true, for his pointed head was beginning to make cracks in the ceiling.

"Well," said John, "If that were true, then there would be no time where there was no molecular motion, and in your class in Thermodynamics I learned that heat was caused by the motion of molecules: take away the heat and you have no motion: take away the motion and you have no time." He looked at the professor happily. "I simply invented a refrigerator to cool my perpetual motion machine to absolute zero."

"Some witch has told you, some witch has told you," cried the old and evil professor; and he leaped up so hard that he burst right through the floor on his way down and fell smash! into the locker room below and injured three bookies and a football player.

John leaned over and shouted down the hole. "Come back up," he yelled. "Come back up, Professor Rumpelstiltskin, and I'll show you some card tricks," but the professor sulked angrily in the locker room, and John said goodbye to the warden and went home to his beautiful wife, and they lived happily until the midterm examinations.

THE END

People Who Make OTHER WORLDS

(Concluded from page 2)

add *Lest Darkness Fall, Divide and Rule, The Wheels of If, The Undesired Princess, Rogue Queen* and the still-to-be-released *The Continent Makers and The Tower of Zanid.*

In regard to *Lost Continents,* which we mentioned earlier, you've no doubt discovered the good news already. Yes, we've made arrangements to bring this book to you in OTHER WORLDS. You'll find the first chapter in this issue, complete with diagrams and slightly condensed for magazine publication. We think it's terrific, and we're sure you're going to back up our opinion and call for more (which is just what we're bringing you in subsequent issues).

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SPECIAL FEATURES

Editorial

(Continued from page 5)

nothing else. Judging from the way you liked his "The Sun-Smiths" you are going to give Richard the recognition his new efforts deserve. Seems all he needed to get in gear was that sale to *If*.

We are also introducing in this number 22 issue a new artist. He's Charles Hornstein, and he's the lad we predict will take over a large share of the future credit for really fine science fiction illustrating. We're going to take him in hand and later on take the credit for another "discovery." Nothing we like better! You'll find a few samples of his work in "Fearless Fergy," "The Naked Goddess."

So, don't you think number 22 is a sort of special number? It certainly means a lot of our dreams coming true, all at once. Now we're going to work on a few more of them . . . as the future will show.

Little item in the news during May that is sort of interesting. It seems down at that Atom Testing Grounds they had to postpone a recent test because of the weather. The "weather" it seems, was the direction of the wind. It so happened that the wind was blowing in the direction the atom scientists were sitting—and they didn't want the "fall-out" of radioactive dust to settle on them. So, they had to wait until the wind was in a different direction, so the fall-out would be on *somebody else*. Damn it, boys, now we got the straight goods from you at last! Well, for your information WE don't like that radioactive fall-out any more than you do! And we think something ought to be done about it. What RIGHT have these crazy army scientists to dump radioactive dust on anybody? They are AFRAID OF IT THEMSELVES! It's time the people of this country woke up to the fact that we are being treated like cattle, herded into a military state, deprived of every right the Constitution and the Bill of Rights has guaranteed us, and without even CONSULTING US!

If you think we're kidding, listen to this: Just last Sunday (June 1) there was an article in a Milwaukee paper about radioactive dust detecting operations going on at two Wisconsin points, one of them Green Bay, which is near to us, and therefore we'll use it as an example. It seems the Atomic Scientists (Government) provide these stations with a sort of "fly-paper" which is spread out on the roof to collect the dust after bomb explosions. Every 24 hours they put out a piece of fly-paper. Then they collect it, burn it, and test the dust for radioactivity. During the May test, radioactivity ten times normal was detected. It lasted three days. In

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other words, for three days radioactive dust, hot from the bomb, 1600 miles away, was sifting down on Green Bay (and incidentally on Ray Palmer's farm).

So, as usual, the line is inserted in the article, in almost the first few paragraphs, that hastens to assure us: "the amount of radioactivity is far less than that you get from an ordinary chest x-ray." In short, don't worry about it, as it won't harm you. We want to tag that statement with the correct label: IT IS A LIE! X-rays are VERY dangerous, and every responsible physician will determine how recent was your last chest x-ray, and how safe it is to give your more than one. In hospitals, you've even got to sign a release in case of extraordinary amounts of exposure to x-rays. Even the x-ray machine in shoe-stores has caused severe injury to both customers and owners of stores, especially the owners, exposed constantly to improperly shielded rays.

The point not brought out is that you are being exposed to this radioactivity from the dust CONSTANTLY for as long as three days. That adds up, brother! It is mighty dangerous. But worse, they are concealing the truth, these particles are not evanescent, flashing, instantly-gone x-rays, but solid particles of "hot" dust, which will give off these rays for THOUSANDS OF YEARS. The half-life of this radioactivity can be found in any text-book on radioactivity, and it runs to figures like 5,680 years and so on. We aren't quoting exact figures, because that's what we want the INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE of *civilian* scientists to do! Another fact concealed is that these bits of radioactivity include the actual bomb components themselves, and these bits, once assimilated into the body, CAN NEVER BE DISLODGED. They accumulate in the marrow of your bones, where the blood cells are manufactured. There they cause lukemia, cancer, damaging burns to surrounding tissue, a disease exactly similar to old-age, mutations (degenerative), and DEATH. Slow, sure, certain.

We will be tagged "alarmist" for saying this. We will be reminded we are just science fiction editors, and not scientists, and that we have no degree in physics. We will be loftily shoved aside by the military. We might even be investigated—and if we are, it will only prove what we said in the opening paragraph of this tirade. But we think somebody's got to say it. We're going to keep on saying it.

Ask any local farmer (Wisconsin gets EVERY fall-out, by the way, because it so happens we're in direct line of that wind the atom boys are so afraid of!) just what strange things are happening on his farm. It's hard to kill off blackberry bushes. They soon become a tangle unless you are ruthless. But the atom bomb sure fixed 'em. Ray Palmer had a half-acre of 'em. Today he has none. A patch that not the severest of Wisconsin winters could bother, wiped

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out by a mild bit of radioactive dust, 1000 times less powerful than an ordinary chest x-ray. To say nothing of our magnificent rose bushes, which did not survive the mildest winter we've had locally in years. It never went below 25 below zero. Now the southern rose experts will jump us and say 25 below will kill *any* rose. Well, you boys better stay south and ignorant, then. Our roses have withstood 40 and 50 below for a lot of years. And take our tomatoes. We keep planting 'em and every warm rain that comes along keeps killing them.

Take a look along the roads where the snowplows piled up the snow. Or where snow fences collected it in huge drifts. Richard S. Shaver recently remarked to me, "There must have been billions of mice under those snowdrifts!" Mice, my foot! No mice killed all that shrubbery and trees. It seems the more delicate things like fruit trees, rose bushes, berry patches (as compared to weeds and box elders which nobody can kill) were suckers for that snow, containing radioactive dust, which was piled high about them. Mice leave teethmarks on their work. There were no teethmarks on all these denuded bushes and trees. What did it?

But, whatever conclusions you draw, the simple fact remains; if the atom scientists don't want any of that dust, neither do we. Go someplace else and fool with your firecrackers, boys. And very soon now we're not going to be so polite as to neglect to mention where! —*Rap.*

PERSONALS

Would like to trade or sell collection of pocket-books, mags and books including FA & AS back to '47, FFM & FN back to '40, F&SF, SS and TWS. Send stamped envelope for complete list. Lewis H. Bennett, 402 Murray Ave, Fairmount, W. Va. . . . *Fast moving social stf group forming in Chicago. All interested parties contact Donn Regan, 6819 S. Claremont Ave, Chicago 36, III.* . . . Wanted: Copies of early stf & fantasy comic books; Prince Valient color newspaper comics; Buck Rogers (daily & Sunday), Flash Gordon, Brick Bradford and the Phantom; stf & fantasy hard cover books; any Burroughs, especially first editions and/or illustrated. US and foreign stf & fantasy PBs; "Time Trap," "Worlds Within," and "Worlds of If" by Rog Phillips. For sale: Autographed "Spacehounds of IPC" by E. E. Smith; complete file of A. Merritt's Fantasy Magazine; 1st issue of FN; 1st three pre-war Science Fiction Quarterly. H. Moskowitz, Three Bridges, N.J. . . . *Want flying saucer clips and prospective members for F-S club to serve as "spotters" for clips and reports*

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and who are willing to pay small dues to cover cost of compiling accurate monthly report. For particulars, write Coral Lorenzen, Rte 1, Sturgeon Bay, Wisc. . . . Would like to correspond with OW readers and exchange copies of British mags for US mags. G H Evans, 8 Haley Hill, Halifax, Yorkshire, England. . . . *Closing my fantasy library. D. C. fans welcome to stop in and buy my fantasy & stf books and mags cheap. Ted Forbes, 2505 Champlain St. N. W., Washington 9, D. C.* . . . For sale, 21c each; OW, Jan, Mar, May & Sept '51; Galaxy, April, May, July, Oct, Nov & Dec '51; aSF, all '51 except June and August, Jan '52; F&SF, Aug, Oct, & Dec '51, Feb '52. D. Adams, 1006 W. Genesee St, Flint, Mich. . . . *Want to buy old stf mags. Send list & prices to James Lewis, R R No. 4, Trenton, Tenn.* . . . Have many hardcover and pocket stf & fantasy books for sale. Send for list. John Walston, Vashon, Wash. . . . *Fans, please correspond with me. Bill St. John, 5 Ayers Place, Oceanside, N. Y.* . . . . Will trade copy of C. A. Smith's out-of-print "Lost Worlds" in good condition for older issues of stf mags such as AS, '38-'43; FA, '40-'43; almost any Unknowns or aSF since early forties; SS, TWS, PS and FFM. Send list and make offers. Robert P. Hoskins, 1 Thurlow Terrace, Albany 3, N. Y. . . . *Wanted: Jan '50 OW No. 2. Claude Hall, Box 611, Winters, Texas.* . . . Bob Goodney, 700 Ellis Ave, Ashland, Wisc. wants back issues of AS, FA, PS, OW and Madge. Would also like to correspond with other fans. . . . *Will buy any pre-'52 issues of Galaxy and any Galaxy Novel except No. 3. Must be in good condition. Ronald Rentz, 130 Vera St, W. Hartford 7, Conn.* . . . For sale, in excellent condition, "Children of Mu," "Sacred Symbols of Mu" & "Lost Continent of Mu" by James Churchwood; "Book of Charles Fort;" "Oahspe," 1st 8 issues of the Shaver Mystery Magazine; "A Dweller on Two Planets" by Phylos. L. E. Cook, P.O. Box 731, Visalia, Calif. . . . *Thomas Reamy, Gen. Del, Andrews, Texas will sell The Scott's International Postage Stamp Album, Parts I and II complete with thousands of stamps. Will take part payment in pre-'51 aSF.* . . . Have recent copies of most stf mags; would like to trade for back issues of any stf mags. Particularly want back issues featuring Bradbury. If you have any Bradbury or old Burroughs novels for sale, send list, price and condition. Michael Reynolds, 603 S. 2nd St, Hiawatha, Kans. . . . *Wanted: All-Around Magazine, Feb '16; Argosy, Feb 20; '37; FA, July '39; Blue Book, April '40; Thrilling Adventures, June '40; AS, Jan '41, Apr '42 and Feb. '43; Blue Book, Jan '42. Ronald Smith, 332 E. Date St, Oxnard, Calif.* . . . Have back issues of various stf mags for sale at 15c and 20c a copy, fair to good condition. Write for list. Jo Ann Bernhardt, 1338 W. Lullwood, San Antonio, Texas. . . . *INSIDE, a new fanzine, 50 pages, mimeo, digest size. Now completed and sells for 25c a copy. Ron Smith,*

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332 E. Date St, Oxnard, Calif. . . . Have a complete list of E. R. Burroughs newspaper and magazine stories, with mags, dates, title changes when published in book form, etc. which I will send on receipt of 10c to cover cost. Need ERB "The Lad and the Lion" and any Burroughs book jackets, any edition and any condition. State your price. Would like to correspond with ERB-fans. John F. Cook, 21 Hawthorne Road, Bradford, Pa. . . . *Will pay cash for Burroughs' "A Fighting Man of Mars," "Swords of Mars," and "Synthetic Men of Mars." Must be in good condition. E. Schaller, 401 W. Fern St, Philadelphia 20, Pa.* . . . Will pay mint and better prices for aSF pre-Aug '51; OW Vol I No. 2; GSF Vol I No. 1, No. 2; any stf or fantasy PBs or mags. Send list. Thomas Carrigan, 179 Sydney St, Dorchester, Mass. . . . *For sale, many stf & fantasy books including: "Best Stf Stories '51," "Darker Than You Think," Williamson, "Warrior of the Dawn," Browne, etc. All $1. Send for list. Roland Dumontet, 363 Linden Blvd, Brooklyn 3, N. Y.* . . . I am buying all stf and fantasy mags from 1940 to date. Write for price list. Ron Smith, 332 E. Date St, Oxnard, Calif. . . . *George Early, now in Korea, wants to correspond with fans. Address: 2nd Lt. George W. Early, AO 2232556, 729 Bomb Sq, 452 Bomb Wing (L), APO 970, Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif.* . . . Am selling my stf collection. Many magazines and once-read books with d/w; enclose stamped return envelope and I'll send complete list. James J. Harvin, 334 S 21 St, Irvington 11, N. J. . . . *Project Fan Club now has a questionnaire. Will all fan clubs contact me? The purpose is to put out a booklet on the care and feeding of infant fan clubs, from birth to maturity—or death! Orville W. Mosher, 1728 Mayfair, Emporia, Kans.* . . . Have many stf mags for sale. Please send 3c stamp for list. P.A.L. Engel, Box 421, Brookings, S. D. . . . *Charles Lee Riddle, PNCA, USN, has moved to Box 463, Church St. Sta., New York 8, N. Y. His fanzine, PEON, will be slightly delayed, due to the fact his material has to be shipped to him from Hawaii, his former address.* . . . Armed Forces Science Fiction, Inc. wants members on other bases. They are currently located at Keesler Field, Miss., with members there, elsewhere, including Japan, Korea, Alaska, etc. They print a partly printed, mostly mimeoed serious fanzine CONFUSION, the first issue which was out in March. Write AFSF, INC. 111 LaMeuse St., Biloxi, Miss for more dope. All service fans welcome.

THE END

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Letters

DAVID S. GARDNER

May I take this opportunity of using some space in your letter column to invite any American fans stationed at Burton Wood Army Air Force Base, some 15 miles from Liverpool, to visit the LIVERPOOL SCIENCE FICTION SOCIETY at their premises. "The Space Dive," 13A, St. Vincent Street (back of Lime Street Station), Liverpool, England.

We are very anxious to meet any American science-fiction fans in this country and we will be ready to welcome them at the above address any Monday night after 7 p.m. The same message also applies to any other Merseyside fans who happen to see this letter.

Fans in America have been so kind to British readers of Science Fiction and Fantasy in supplying them with reading material during and after the war years that we feel this is the least we can do to show our gratitude.

Don't forget, you'll find us there any Monday night, just push the door open and walk in.

63, Island Road,
Liverpool, 19.
Lancashire,
England

EDWARD J. McEVOY

I am sorry to say that THESE ARE MY CHILDREN was not as good as SO SHALL YE REAP. But it was a very interesting novel. The other stories in the issue were very good and one important thing I would like to point out and that is your editorials are the best in the STF field. This is no exaggeration. This might sound like an ad but you can bet it isn't. When GALAXY first came out I thought that they had the best editorial but ever since the first few issues my mind changed completely.

One other thing I'd like to mention is, please print Shaver's 250,000 novel as soon as you can. If you could think back a few years you will remember a handwritten letter I sent you concerning the August issue of 1948. That was AS. The letter was a loud, quick-thoughted, mean piece of work that was part of the GETTING RID OF SHAVER ACT. I take that back and the reason being I was too young at the time to understand the Shaver type of story. I am probably not the only reader who thought the same at that time so please forget it. Shaver writes better than any STF writer to date with the exception of Ray Bradbury. So here's wishing you lots of luck with my favorite magazine. Other Worlds is first, Galaxy is second. THE DEMOLISHED MAN by ALFRED BESTER—*STUNK*.

54 60 43rd St.
Maspeth 78, N.Y.

It's not really fair to criticize the stories in other magazines, but your editor has been put on the spot by Henry Bott who is a friend of Bill Hamling, who is a scoundrel. (He owns Imagination, and doesn't that

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make him a scoundrel? Deft reasoning, eh what?) But Hank thinks the Demolished Man is super-terrific. Now, since Hank is a hide-bound scientist who worships textbooks, we automatically disagree with him, which drives him to drink. But frankly, we would have rejected Al Bester's story, although Al is a really top writer! Reason, we have an unreasoning objection to carrying a yarn with gimmicks! And it was hard to read. Your opinion shows how these things can ruin a good story! The story might be good, we don't know — and we'll never know—because we couldn't read it. Al, when you write for us, don't try to fancy it up, will you?
—Rap

ADDENDA: Although I agree with Ray about Mr. Hamling, I disagree about "The Demolished Man" which I thought an exceptionally good story! *—Bea.*

ADDENDA TO THE ADDENDA: So there! *—Rap*

CONRAD PAVELLAS

Your editorial in the April issue is very soothing to the damaged ego of a s-f fan dating from the paleolithic times of the old Argosy. in 1928. Having endured the slings and arrows of outrageous non-fans all this time with consequent accumulation of engrams, having taken the jibes and lifted eyebrows of otherwise well-meaning friends because of lurid covers and "trashy" literature, I can at last raise my head above the milling herd with a calm, albeit slightly bitter, smile, because you have given a new definition of the science fiction reader—the unobstructed mind.

Your utter frankness in answer to various letters encourages me to be the same. I will admit that I read for amusement, not primarily for instruction. I enjoy the lusty side of life, clever characterizations, and even those lurid covers (when they are artistically done). But my greatest delight is in discovering some rare gem of thought, some new angle on this great wonderland of our universe, embodied in a story. An example is the story about the man who did not believe the sun still shone when he went to a movie. You get the idea, it was all a stage-setting for his benefit. After many an argument on this subject with his wife, he finally said positively, "You absolutely cannot fool me any longer." "Well," she shrugged, "if I can't I might as well give up." She resumed her original shape and slithered off to report to her superiors.

I don't mean to imply that I believe the world to be an illusion. However, it makes an interesting hypothesis; and it is this ability to enjoy many hypotheses and ideas, this mental flexibility unobstructed by hard-shell prejudices which characterizes the s-f-trained mind. Inevitably s-f will come into its own in all media as mental maturity overtakes the world.

I particularly like your answer to a letter as to whether s-f is breaking

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down man's acceptance of religion. Reading the letter, there immediately came to my mind the many approaches by which man has sought the Supreme Being. Some scientifically-minded explain the enigmas of time, space, motion, infinity through the study of the fourth dimension — metaphysics. Then there are the practitioners of scientific prayer who try to channel their requests to the fountainhead of power. It is the privilege of the unobstructed mind to evaluate the qualities and effectiveness of all religions.

It's no use my rating the stories because you know dog-gone well I'm going to keep on buying all the available s-f on the market. Just please yourself and you are pleasing me.

311 Moultrie St.
San Francisco, Cal.

No comment!—Rap.

JIM HARMON

I would like to take this opportunity to announce my candidacy for the Presidency of the United States of America. After reading your editorial in the April OTHER WORLDS, I have seen my duty.

I had some difficulty choosing my running-mate. The job of Vice-President calls for a big man so I have elected the biggest man I know—Bob Farnham, 260 pounds. I have also decided on my cabinet and a few other offices. For Secretary of the Treasury I have chosen a man who comes up to the standard of the country, H. L. Gold. I plan to appoint as Secretary of the Interior a man who knows the world inside and out, Richard Shaver. An obvious choice for Secretary of Labor is the only person who could get along with John L. Lewis, Samuel Mines. The obvious man for Postmaster-General is W. Max Keasler. He has had a lot of experience with the Post Office as editor of FANVARIETY. Then for Attorney-General, there's Bob Tucker. Always a stickler for legality. I can't quite decide who should be Secretary of Agriculture. Maybe I should appoint traveling salesman Henry Burwell. He knows more about farmer's daughters. Of course, there's only one man for Secretary of State: Forrest J Ackerman. He would be the perfect diplomat. I heard many people say that he should be in striped trousers . . . or maybe it was just stripes. I plan to appoint Lila Shaffer, the editor of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES who recently selected one of my communications as "Letter of the Month", to the Supreme Court. I've never seen better judgment. I intend to appoint another girl, Lee Hoffman, to another important office—Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She knows how to keep things undercover. Stf writer - musician - composer Jerry Shelton will make a fine head of the Atomic Energy Commission. He knows the score. Finally, I plan to make L. Ron Hubbard chief of the Washington, D. C. Department of

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Sanitation. I'm sure he can "clear" the streets. I had considered appointing you, Rap, to some office, but could I trust Palmer's hands around the till?

Needless to say, I am running on the Fandom ticket. If elected I promise to make Hugo Gernsback's birthday a national holiday; subsidize all amateur and professional science-fiction publications, so you can put out a 320 page OTHER WORLDS and still make a profit; and start showering copies of OW all over the Iron Curtain countries. Perhaps these stf magazines—foreign language editions—will raise Communist maturity to a point where they will do away with such an illogical form of government and work for peace. Even if not, they will be so anxious to read the rest of the serials that they will sign a Peace Treaty just to get future issues.

I have no doubt of ultimate election. After all, who better than Jim Harmon could achieve World Harmony?

427 E. 8th St.
Mt. Carmel, Ill.

You bet! A vote for Harmon is a vote for harmony! All together now—there's no harm in Harmon!
—Rap.

LARRY B. FARSACE

I don't know if I should be telling you this, but, notwithstanding your forecast for more work by Hannes Bok in the current *Other Worlds,* I'm afraid he's slipping through your fingers. And I, for one, (and I'm sure most everybody), will be missing such covers as those he has executed for you.

So what I'm asking you to do is this (and for the sake of us readers as well), couldn't you ask him to do some more covers for you for your future issues? At least on a part-time basis, even if he *is* going to other fields?

187 North Union Street
Rochester 5, New York

Sez you! Well, for your info, Hannes has two very fine covers on hand right now, and we're going to give them to you in their full glory without a stitch (of type) on 'em (or anything on the gal either!) on our back covers—which will make FANTASTIC's back cover snakes look like snakes! Man, they're beautiful! Wait'll you see 'em. You'll have to watch the back to see that Bok is not only back, but he never left us!—Rap.

ALAN BEATTIE

Knowing full well that you will not dare publish this startling expose, we send it in anyway, hoping that your lax editorial policy will let it slip by and inform the fen of what shenanigans are going on in stf.

Palmer, your goose is cooked! You'll never be able to kill this, even if you kill me (ha, ha!).

Raymond A. Palmer, as you all know, admits to being editor of an unknown magazine named *Other Worlds,* but few people know that he CONTROLS stf almost com-

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pletely! This letter will prove this beyond a shadow of DOUBT!

First: He is Robert N. Webster, W. E. Hamling, Howard Browne, and Lila Shaffer, because, as you all know, once he got his grubby hands on a mag he wouldn't let go for even a NUDE!

Second: he is Richard Shaver, thanks to Paul Fairman in the May 1952 IF, the magazine with a future?

Third: due to similarity of initials, he is R. A. Heinlein, and therefore Anson McDonald. From that we get J. D. McDonald, and J. D. Carr, and thence to R. S. Carr.

Fourth: it is obvious that he is L. S. de Camp, H. B. Fyfe, and Manly Wade Wellman. From those we get H. B. Piper, and, due to the Horaces, also H. L. Gold. Due to the fact (and a well-known fact it is) that Rap would not collaborate with anybody, he is Fletcher Pratt. From the *Wade* in M. W. Wellman, we deduce that he is John *Wade* Campbell, Jr. also.

We could go on for days and days, but we think (oh, yes we can) that this is enough to prove to the most discerning fan that what we say is true. We leave it up to all fen to decide the sentence of this rank imposter. Maybe we should take away all his NUDE fotos and paintings—GOOD LORD, what a cruel punishment—or something equally nasty, such as making him read all his own stories over and over again.

If you want to rewrite this into a

LOST CONTINENTS

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1986 Geary Rd.
Walnut Creek, Calif.

You forgot one thing—I am also the man in the iron mask (which you'd know if you ever tried to sell me a manuscript in person!)—Rap.

PAUL NOWELL

One of my favorite subjects is the Flying Saucer, of which I have read a lot about. One of the best books on the subject, by the way, is Donald Keyhoe's "The Flying Saucers Are Real." Another, of which I could give a few choice remarks, but won't for fear of mail censors is Scully's "Behind the Flying Saucers" and I know why he's behind them, too. But to get to the point, after reading so many different articles on the flying saucers, I have made my own conclusions, which I won't state now. The fact that bigger people are trying to keep the saucer stories down isn't new, but nevertheless, I would like to put in my two cents. Last January I read a copy of *The American Weekly,* and saw an article in it called "No Animal or Human Lives Here" by Professor Bart J. Bok. This was an article on why "life as we know it" (a common phrase) can't and never did exist on Mars. All in all, it appeared to be a normal article of that type, along with a dozen others, until it got near the end. It seemed to get suspiciously aimed (I can't think of a better word). To explain myself, it seemed to impress another fact (or theory) besides that of no life on Mars, and that was — *definitely* no life on Mars. If I might be permitted to quote a paragraph of said article, you might understand.

"Remember, however, that no matter what anyone tells you, there are no human beings living on Mars. Mars has no strange creatures such as fiction writers have depicted or such as comic strip artists have drawn."

This paragraph may not seem unusual to you, but I received the impression that they were trying to force the idea of no life on Mars onto you. It is as if there was life on Mars, and they were purposely trying to conceal it by presenting facts (if they truly are facts). There could be life on Mars and we wouldn't know it, after all, the public doesn't have access to Palomar, and the astronomers wouldn't tell us so.

Anyhow, I thought I'd bring the article to your attention, since you seem so interested in saucers.

6528 Gentry Ave.
No. Hollywood, Calif.

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GOOD look? It's just that they are sure! Personally, we wouldn't stick our neck out that far. Maybe human beings on Mars are separated from us and reality only by TIME. Maybe Earth will be talked about by Venus scientists the same way in a couple million years (or less). Besides, our Army intends to land human beings on Mars, sooner or later, and then Mr. Bart Bok will be wrong — because there will be some "comic characters" there! One of 'em called on us a few weeks ago to see our Saucer Launching Platform, which, fortunately, we'd just torn down and disguised as a sawmill. All because we called a turn on the disks.—Rap.

REID F. WILLIAMS

I must send the letter to you, although the article was in "IF". I am talking about the little thing about you and Shaver. I thought that the editor, Paul Fairman, did a good job as a writer; but as a diehard cave hunter I couldn't buy it.

I didn't like the remarks about "heavy sex-and-sadism flavor" which were supposed to be enlightening. There was nothing wrong with the sex in the Shaver Mystery stories. I think that the whole race must be oversexed to keep the race going. No one would bring children into this mad world for any other reason. I said no one, actually I should have said no large number of people.

As for sadism I can say this. Just ask editor Fairman to make a left turn at Third and Main in Deleted, Arkansas without one of the city tags on his car. He doesn't have to leave Earth to find sadism of the sort he thought was overdone.

I might mention that the Air Force says now that it was all a mistake, they hadn't quit investigating the flying saucers. I don't give a hang about that though, as I have seen one.

As for "cheerful reading" he can check on the increase in sales as compared to the number of letters about the stories. The proof of the reading is in the sales volume, not in the letters to the editor. The "Mystery" has kept many of us buying OTHER WORLDS for a long time just in hopes. No one killed the "Mystery" as it will never die.

132 Central Avenue
Jacksonville, Arkansas

We deleted the name of the town, Reid, as we might drive through there someday, and we wouldn't want the cops down on us! But most traffic cops do get a terrific belly-ache over some drivers, so maybe there was an excuse? And do you know what we're gonna do? We're gonna publish a book called "The Shaver Mystery." No kidding, we're convinced. Paul Fairman, old boy, the super salesman senses a saleable stunt! Wanna buy a copy? The real lowdown. The whole shebang. But not in OW, please! Shaver's stories in OW are not true, they are fiction, and they are darn good.—Rap.

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The MAN From TOMORROW

Dear Rap:

I am sending you an article taken from the New York *Herald Tribune* of Sunday, May 18, 1952. This is in regard to a statement made by The Man From Tomorrow, page 154, second column, second paragraph, March 1952 issue of OTHER WORLDS.

Peter Schoonrok
206 Grand Street
Jersey City 2, N. J.

SCIENCE

A vast swarm of meteoric particles and bodies is believed to be traveling around the sun in the plane of the earth's orbit. Its existence has been proposed to account for the zodiacal light. This is a southward tilted, cone-shaped band of light seen in the sky above the point at which the sun sets.

Zodiacal light is sunlight reflected from solid objects, meteorites, the spectroscope reveals. The zodiacal light can be observed when the earth is at any point of its orbit around the sun, hence the conclusion was drawn that the swarm of meteorites extends all around the sun, in a band which extends out as far as the farthest planet. If this were true, however, a band of zodiacal light brighter than that seen at sunset would be seen in the sky on the ecliptic with uniform intensity, from horizon to horizon, throughout the night.

Such a band of light is not seen at night. This spoils the theory that the meteor swarm is moving around the sun. The simpler explanation that fits all observations is that the meteor swarm is moving around the earth. Such a continuous cloud of meteors moving around the earth would be seen as a cone of light at sunrise and sunset but would not be seen at night because the cloud, then in the darkness of the earth's shadow, would not reflect any light.

In this view, therefore, the continuous swarm of meteors is moving around the earth. It extends east and west in a broad band from horizon to horizon in the path of the sun by dark and the planets by night. In the daytime its reflected light is lost in the intense radiation of the sun. Hundreds of observations are on record of very large meteorites in the cloud passing in front of the sun and moon. These are a few hundred to a few thousand feet in diameter.

Meteors of this size are in the minority in the cloud. As the size diminishes, the number increases at a tremendous rate. The cloud around the earth is made up of uncounted billions of meteorites the size of a pinhead or smaller; too small to be seen individually.

These meteors have been captured long ago by the earth under conditions of relative velocities which caused the particles to become satellites of the earth. In the

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cloud they are moving in both directions. Collisions are frequent. When this happens meteorites that lose velocity fall to the earth as shooting stars, or fireballs when large. Meteorites passing over the bump in the earth's gravitational field, caused by the equatorial bulge, will have their orbits distorted, increasing collision frequency and the casting out of shooting stars.

As minor collisions are taking place in vast numbers every day, very fine rock and iron is ground off the meteorites in the cloud. The iron dust settles slowly to the earth and, being magnetic, will move toward either magnetic pole of the earth. The stone dust containing the diamagnetic (antimagnetic) substances, will be repelled by the earth's magnetic field. In the battle between the downward pull of gravity and the upward push of the magnetic field, heavier particles will drift toward the earth and very fine particles of sufficiently light weight will rise.

As the antimagnetic particles rise, they move to that part of the earth's magnetic field which is weakest. This is the plane passing through the earth's magnetic equator. Here they will form a disk like the rings of Saturn. Its inner diameter will be larger than the outer diameter of the cloud of meteorites.

Both the cloud of meteorites in the plane of the ecliptic and the dust in the ring-shaped disk are so attenuated they are not easily seen from the earth's surface. A person in a rainstorm can see clearly through the rain for a long distance, but to an observer a few miles away the falling rain looks like a solid dark mass. To a telescope observer on another planet, for whom the diffused light from the meteor cloud and dust disk would be condensed into a very small area and greatly intensified, the earth would present a most unusual appearance.

He would see a doughnut shaped cloud of light around the earth that remained fixed with reference to the earth's axis, and an outer disk of light, making an angle with the plane of the inner cloud. The outer ring would rotate with the earth, locked to the earth's magnetic field and would wobble with a twenty-four-hour period with respect to the inner cloud.

Score another one for the Man From Tomorrow. The Earth has a ring, like Saturn!

Rap:

I was at first amused at your prophetic attempts . . . Then I began to think that possibly they might be true . . . at least one or two of them as plainly the others were mainly wild guessing. I tried to help you a bit by telling you about the weather conditions down here as compared to your wild guessing. Naturally I thought that you'd not become a liar and propagate said lies in future issues of OW. But when I happened to see

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the last issue and glanced at the Man From Tomorrow section I was enraged when I saw that you claimed that the temps. did go to 61 below here and that it got to 74 below in the Hudson Bay area and due to your getting a weather report over the air . . . Well I refute those statements. It definitely did not get to 61 below here. In fact it was quite a mild winter with the temp. rarely going below 20 below. The Hudson Bay area did not go to 74 below. If over 60 below then it was a miracle. And if you persist in saying that the temp. did go that low disregarding a citizen of the Province of Manitoba and who has kept abreast of the weather in the other near-by surroundings then all I can say is that you're getting to be nothing but a cheap sensationalist. I dare you to print this missive and to continue on blandly with the lie that it got down to 61 below zero here and Sask. Lowest reached in Hudson Bay area was 41 below on February 29. Lowest reached in Manitoba was at Broché in Dec. —51 below.

Doug. Mitchell
Suite 11-406 Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Absolutely correct, Doug. We checked with the radio station, and the report had been 51 below, not sixty-one. It was our hearing that was at fault. And now that all the figures are in, score one against *the Man From Tomorrow—he missed on the cold for the winter of 1951-52. However, he did* not *miss on the precipitation—it broke all records. Both rain and snowfall were the heaviest in history. He missed again on the temperature in Florida. Although there was a typesetters misprint which made 19 above read 19* below, *it did not go down to 19 above! Two misses. Let's count only misses for awhile?*

Of six cities mentioned for record snows last winter, only New York failed to get its record-breaker. Chicago was really buried! But New York had the most rain. Score one-sixth wrong for our prophet. The weather in Korea was sadly unpublicized. Score one more wrong for the crystal ball.

No announcement yet of atom bomb in Russia, except that now our Government admits there have been three. *Maybe we weren't wrong after all?*

As we write this, the Democratic National Convention hasn't yet been held (It's June 5 today) but our readers are jubilantly pointing out that Harry S. Truman won't be our next president as predicted. Tough to have to wait to score this another error!

So, here we are with 2 and one-sixth sure misses and two more possibles. Looks like that percentage is going to be pretty high. Next month we'll try to give only short-range predictions, so that we won't have to wait until four or five years to see how right we are. —Rap.

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NEBULOSITIES

Vaporings from the mind of the editor; random gas explosions; atmospheric bits from the gaseous envelope of Other Worlds; including hot air from the nebula of faithful readers; offered for the next to nothing it is worth. Your contributions are welcome—anything might serve to start the editor gassing.

SCIENCE fiction, we think, is history before it happens. Which, of course, means history is science fiction; that is, it can be included in science fiction without being called anything else. Historically, then, we wonder how much of our school study was spent swallowing science fiction for what it wasn't? Biggest full-time job of the centuries has been revision of history texts. Revision to suit the then in power political crew. That being true, then most history is fiction. And also, that being true, we have a right to revise our future history before it happens. Let's do just that . . .

Tomorrow, says science fiction, we go to the Moon. And the day after, we go to Mars. The day after that, to the Stars. Our day-ta is figurative, naturally. But what's a day between a couple of far-seeing science fiction fans? A drop of water in the sea of Time; a grain of sand in the desert of Duration. Well, when the truth outs, maybe we'll find we've already been to the Moon! How, you ask? Past civilizations we've edited out of history, for one; and our own army for number two. Fact is, we've seen something out there on the Moon recently. Spaceships, claim some star gazers. We dunno. We only know it's possible. If it wasn't, we'd have no science fiction, and everybody knows—ah heck, you know what we know about science fiction! It's history, looked at from the other end of the telescope of Time!

* * *

SEEMS TO US all wars might be prevented by the invention of a very simple gadget that ought to be duck soup to our science fiction inventors: every time some guy starts planning a war, a defense, a new weapon, Plan B, Operation Blotz, or a fist-fight, it should be we have an invention that makes him drop dead! Enough guys drop dead from those nasty ideas, and maybe we'd think peace instead of war. That's our trouble, we think. We think wrong! We, for one, are for peace, and we'll demonstrate our cowardly unwillingness to fight anytime anybody asks us to. We'll turn every cheek we got.

* * *

READ THE PAPER? Listen to the radio? See it on television? You do? How do you know it's true? Maybe it's ALL science fiction. A scientific way of telling lies. What's called psychological warfare. The science of propaganda. Once upon a

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time a civilization destroyed itself, maybe via atom bombs (they found that there green glass atop a series of very ancient city-sites in Asia, didn't they?), but the truth was, it was the power of the spoken word that did it. So many lies were uttered that everybody became convinced it was the truth, and made desperate by their fear of the lie that was being uttered, they set out to destroy the menace—each other. Try NOT reading the paper, listening to the radio, looking at the television; funny how peaceful it suddenly becomes! Oh, so you think that's being an ostrich? Well, what if that's all there were in the world but ostriches? Can you see them kicking each other in the Frenchmen's Flats? No, it's the dirty bum who sneaks a look and sees all those tempting posteriors to be booted. War, mah frans, is made by people who WANT war. Let's use science fiction to show the world WE don't want war! Let's talk peace in our stories. How about it, you writers? We've wrecked the future too darned often. Let's make with the happy side. Ostrichlike. Like gentlemen. Like the pure in heart!

* * *

THE OTHER DAY we went with Richard S. Shaver (inventor? of the Shaver Mystery) to see "The Day The Earth Stood Still." Somebody, we think, slipped the good ole' guvment and the ahmy a mickey! How stupid can you paint anybody? If anybody's sympathy WASN'T with the "invader" Klaatu, it wasn't the fault of the scenario writer! Trouble with the whole thing was, it's probably just exactly the way we'd welcome a visitor in a space ship. Especially if he came in a Flying Saucer! Brother, how the lies have flown about concerning those saucers! And most of them from the propaganda department. Propaganda is also used to make you not see something you keep on seeing that isn't there only it really is. You want OUR opinion? Klaatu REALLY was here! Only he wasn't stupid enough to land in Washington . . .

* * *

THOSE RUSSIANS are just like Americans! First they complain that we are changing the weather with our atom bomb tests. (Which is true.) Then they turn around and start blasting 'em off themselves; and look what happens to poor Italy! She gets the flood treatment just like Kansas and Missouri got it from our tests, last June-July 1951. Only this happened November. Pattern is almost the same. So much so that now we are waiting for the Kremlin to start bawling in the propaganda vein about how "the atom can't make it rain, as Hero of Soviet Meteorology has examined rain and found no atoms." Why don't both sides admit the bombs are making the weather miserable? What could we do about it? Yell our heads off? They got us so scared with the big

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ie that we wouldn't dare protest anyway, except we qualify it by saying we are "merely exercising our right to criticize" as good American citizens—only we don't really mean it, Papa.

* * *

WE BEEN going around asking people if they want war. So far we got 100% the same answer. NO. Some science fiction in the woodpile somewhere! But even Stalin says no. Hey, what we got to worry about? Science fiction story of tomorrow says no war comes off. No third world war. It's gotta say that! Because science fiction is *based* on fact. (Ask any editor how many yarns he rejects "science unfounded.") And it's a fact nobody wants war. So, how can we have war?

* * *

TO CONTINUE our reversal of science fiction history, don't worry about the Martians coming here—they must already have been here! Might be Martian blood in all of us! And people from other Stars? Incredible as it seems, some people actually believe they've never visited this solar system! Maybe that's why ostriches put their heads in the sand! No telling how long the ostrich has been around, and how well he remembers! So naturally, since it's happened before, it'll happen again. Maybe that thing we saw in the sky in 1939 WAS a spaceship!

JUST THE OTHER day we learned our US population increased 4,000,000 in ONE year. Say, now we are beginning to suspect lies somewhere. If that is true, then we will have a population in ten years of 200,000,000, and in fifty years of 600,000,000! (The thing snowballs, y' know.) What was that gag about if the Chinese marched four abreast past one point, they'd never get through going past? Make it six abreast, and make it Americans! And start marching—if you aren't too hungry! Yup, that's what's got us worried now—good. We ain't gonna be able to feed that many! Not with the agriculture methods we got now. And worse, every ton more we raise, the less nourishing it is. Finally we are going to be pot-bellied from excess eating, and still be hungry. Yeah, science fiction is right—the soil of our planet is being depleted of its food-value. And all we're putting back into it is poison.

Say, how do they know what the population of the world is, anyway? Is there any way of really telling? This crazy report of 1951's increase, which is way outa line from previous "estimates," makes us think the census is the senseless. Like counting goldfish in a dime store tank—they mill around so you just can't count 'em.

* * *

COMES NOW the scientist (we could give you his name, to make this sound authentic, but we're just go-

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ing to be stubborn about conforming to the idea we gotta bolster everything we say or maybe it's a lie) who theorizes that ice ages in the past were caused by radioactive outbursts from the sun, atomic energy floods from disturbances in old Sol. We are inclined to believe him. Now, supposing it's true, just what the heck do they think all this atom bombing will do? Already we feel the pinch of that ice sheet creeping down on us from out'n the north! Science fiction tells us it wasn't the sun at all, but previous atom ages in previous civilizations, which caused the ice ages of the previous.

* * *

BACK IN 1926 we began reading stories of the future, about the world of 1950. They had us popeyed. Gosh, was all that really going to happen? If you want some laughs, some shocks, and some bits of puzzlement, why not read those things over again? Amazing how much of it was accurate, isn't it? But amazing too, how much wasn't. Especially the part about people becoming more civilized, more honest, more upright, more moral, more better. Nuts. Take a look around you. Seems as though everybody's a crook, a killer, a hater, a dirty so and so, or something. And what good is all the nice civilization and its handy gadgets if people ain't good? Today we got 'em, tomorrow we get bombed out of 'em. And all the time we're afraid. And we devote prodigious effort to preparing to defend ourselves. 70% of our national effort. We've darned little left for real civilization after our evil little minds get through machinating.

* * *

REMEMBER those science fiction yarns about the police states of the future? Some of them took place in 1950. Way back in 1930 we were forecasting it. How we got it? Well, we've got a pretty busy police system which is engaged in "loyalty" investigations. And now, with so many firms being given "defense contracts," each and every worker has to be "cleared," more and more Americans got to prove their "loyalty." And you never know if the gas meter man is really a gas meter man, or one of these darn loyalty guys sneaking around to see if you aren't maybe a subscriber to pink magazines (and if they find a Daily Worker in the trash can in the basement, you're cooked!). At least you can't hold that defense job. Emergency giving up of our American rights to privacy and personal liberty of thinking, that's what they say. Weak-gutted commentators say it's temporarily necessary that we do these things, due to the menace to our freedom from outside. We aren't so weak-gutted. We say nuts. It's better to trust ALL Americans and deal with the untrustworthy as they demonstrate their untrustworthiness, than live in an atmosphere of mutual distrust of ev-

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erybody until proven innocent. Since when is an American guilty until proven innocent (or, rather, until he's cleared by a stupid policeman, who probably isn't clear himself—who says this policeman is qualified to clear anybody!)? But there are a lot of Americans who are so far sold on the big lie that they actually believe this tripe. Personally, we'll live and die free and honorable American. And no amount of "clearing" will change that. We stand on our word and our dignity and our dependability. Let our actions speak for themselves.

* * *

SCIENCE FICTION has often shown the future a wreck through earthquake and eruption. It's a favorite of the movies, too. They wind up "spectacle" pictures with a big quake and a mountain blowing its top. Well, it's happening now, too. More science fiction coming true. Most recent is the big quake in Asia, north of Lhasa, in Tibet. Not much word about it, but it registered at the top of the severity scale. Last year a similar earthquake devastated central China. Not much word reached us, but hundreds of thousands of Chinese died. Next it was Formosa, and if you've seen the newsreels, it was some shake! 1951 had some terrific quakes. In South America a mountain blew its top, killed 4,000. So many unusually severe earthquakes. And strangely, all of them quite close chronologically, to atom bomb tests. The Earth's crust develops terrific stresses, and hammer blows like the atom delivers can "shake down" supporting strata. Especially if you keep pounding at the same spot. Science fiction coming true. Man-made earthquakes. Only the men who are doing it deny it. Why bother, unless they are afraid maybe somebody will prove it on them?

* * *

CIVILIZATION is the destroyer of freedom. It is complete mechanization and domination by a mechanical system. You've got to be a cog when the whole world becomes a machine. Science fiction gives us the answer again—the destruction of the civilization. Its total collapse. And it's inevitable. No city was ever built that was not destroyed; no civilization that did not fall; no culture that did not degenerate. Ours is no exception, except that when it falls, it'll be with a bigger bang than all the rest. History (science fiction) says it happened! Makes things look different, looking at them from the other end of the telescope, doesn't it? And why not just as true? You know the answer—it is true!

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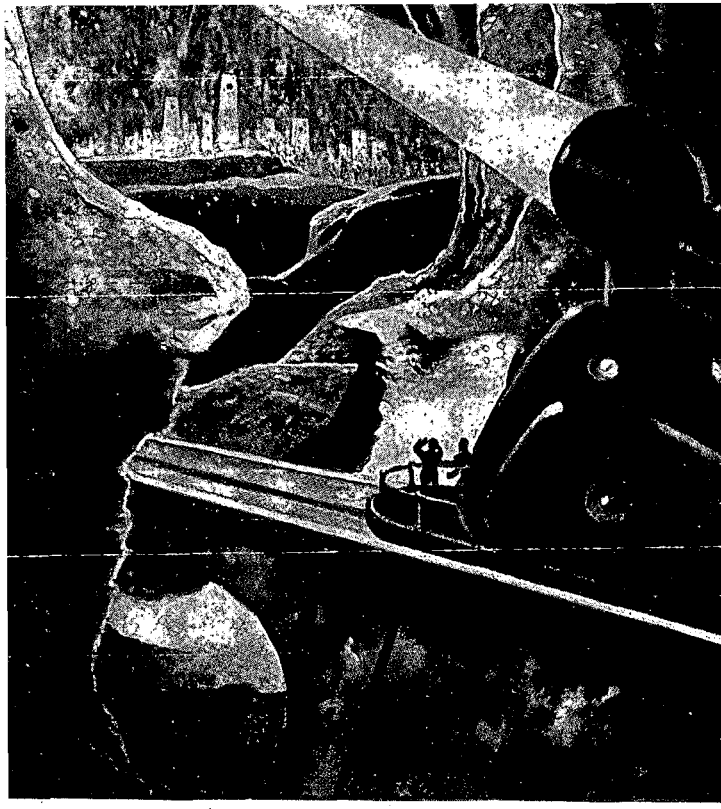

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